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WEEKLY

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1999... THE OLYMPIC YEAR?

Plus ...

- **The Four Diegos with Man City's Danny Tiatto**
- **ABC TV's David Hardaker**
- **Young Socceroos**
and a whole lot more

SOCCER WEEKLY

AUSSIE & BRITISH SOCCER WEEKLY

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 "GO THE YOUNG SOCCEROOS"

Confident Colosimo leads Young Socceroos

By Aidan Ormond

Tomorrow the Young Socceroos head off from Sydney to begin preparations for the World Youth Championships in Nigeria.

The team will be based in Holland for a month before leaving for Africa.

The obvious stars of the side are Captain Simon Colosimo, Brett Emerton, Danish-based Jason Culina and Westerlo's John Maisano (see squad on facing page).

"I spoke to John Maisano last night from Belgium," said Simon Colosimo, "and the feeling is not too bad actually. I think that overall we are quietly confident."

The Young Socceroos have about five games in four weeks in Holland, and this is

something Colosimo is clearly happy about, despite having reservations about playing in a country like Nigeria.

"In Holland we will get good quality opposition, I don't think the change in climate will be a problem. We are in the best place (Holland) for preparation. Last time in Malaysia the games were not of a great standard in the lead-up"

Recently the Young Socceroos lost twice to a country that is fast becoming our bogey side: South Korea, but this does not bother the Young Socceroo.

"We did very well in South America last year, but these recent training games against the Koreans was the first time we had been together since the qualifiers, so we were bound to be rusty. And the

Koreans, well they were extremely well organised and prepared.

"The boys just want to put those training games behind them and focus on Europe,"

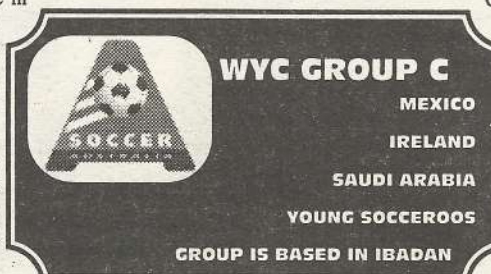
know too much, but Ireland are the Euro champions. I should be marking star player Robbie Keane, but I am ready. And there are a few Brazilians from the Olyroo Challenge 12 months ago, so they should remember us!"

So how far can they go?

"Aidan you ring me before the semis and I will tell you!"

This campaign is seen by Colosimo as redemption time. Malaysia 97 was a big disappointment (he was injured in the lead-up games and had little game time). This tournament has been uppermost in his mind since.

"I've been waiting a while for this. I just hope the fans can come out to the airport when we return and see the Cup for themselves," ended the confident Captain of our Young Socceroos.



says him with relish.

And the fact that former Carlton and Young Socceroo teammate Vince Grella, currently playing at Empoli in the Serie A, will be there with Colosimo, is a major motivating factor.

"Mate, it will great to play with Vinnie again. Vinnie will be key member. He was one of the younger players in Malaysia 97, now he is one of the most experienced — someone who will be looked up to by most of the squad, so we are expecting something special for this campaign from him.

As for the opposition, I don't

In other news ... It was with much sadness that Soccer Weekly heard of the passing away of former Socceroo Alan Niven. Our condolences go out to the family ... Jason Culina's new club Brondby have had their fans go on a rampage. Welcome Jason! ... See Soccer Weekly next week for the Four Diegos interview with Socceroo/Olyroo Nick Rizzo. Not to be missed.



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HAVE YOUR SAY

What has happened to the television coverage of the NSL? We were told we'd be viewing live games each week. And yet, last Sunday we were watching the Northern Spirit vs Adelaide City game which was played on Friday night.

Our region has only been receiving SBS transmissions for the past month, but on a number of previous occasions, I had viewed their coverage of the NSL whilst I was in Brisbane. The hour long program generally gave a well balanced overview of the weekend's games. Now, we are receiving the ABC's "live" game, with a half-time highlight package of the previous round plus any games of the current round, all condensed into a 10 - 15 minute slot. Coverage which is usually a week old.

It's bad enough that television program guides do not

advertise which game will be screened, but I am beginning to wonder why I have seen so much of the Sydney and Melbourne clubs and so little of Queensland, Western Australia and South Australian clubs.

Now that rugby season has started (Has the cricket season ended?), it seems that no Prime Time program is safe in its slot if there happens to be a live rugby game to be televised. And yet, it appears the World Game is reduced to whatever crumbs are left over after all other programming has been completed. Why is the most popular sport in the world relegated to last place for television?

Jan Munday-Barb
 Rockhampton
 Queensland

Australian News

By Dwyght Tuffnell

Anthony Breaden may not have played in the Ericsson Cup, and not many of us would have seen him play but he must be a very special goalkeeper. Breaden has beaten a field of terrific young Australian goalkeepers to the number one jersey for next month's World Youth Championship in Nigeria.

"There are a lot of good, young 'keepers around" says Breaden. "To get selected is pretty special, it's excellent," he said while waiting to leave Sydney.

It says much of Australia's goalkeeping stocks when keepers such as Newcastle's Brad Swancott, Melbourne Knights' Martin John and English-based Tynan Scope, who are all on the stand-by list, are overlooked.

The Young Socceroos opponents for Nigeria are yet to be determined but, despite recent disappointing results, Breaden rates the team's chances highly.

"We'll do extremely well" he says confidently. "The squad is second to none, this would have to be one of the best youth teams Australia has ever sent to a World Cup."

The squad leaves tomorrow for games and training camps in both Spain and Holland before arriving in Nigeria for the start of the championships, which begin on April 3.

Now that a whole series of inoculations that are required for travelling to Nigeria are done with, Breaden says he "buzzing" and can't wait to board the flight tomorrow.

Breaden, who turned 20 on Sunday, is Tasmanian born and bred.

He follows the likes of Dominic Longo and David Clarkson as Tasmanians who have played for Australia's various national teams, though he admits it doesn't mean an awful lot to him.

"Maybe it's special for people in Tasmania who can say that they had input into my goalkeeping" he explains.

"I'm very proud to be from Tasmania, but I don't really think of it that much, I just like to get on with my job."

Now in his third season with Adelaide City, Breaden has still yet to make a first team appearance for the Zebras.

There are pros and cons playing behind one of the Ericsson Cup's best 'keepers, Jason Petkovic.

"Jason's been the City 'keeper for about five years,

YOUNG TASMANIAN'S AFRICAN ADVENTURE BEGINS

and hasn't missed a game in that period" says Breaden.

"But I've learnt to accept that. It's fantastic to be able to go to training and learn things off him.

"Jason has the pressure on him to perform week in, week out, but I'm not saying that I wouldn't be able to handle it.

Sports Institute after being spotted in Tasmania.

From there both of Adelaide's Ericsson Cup clubs were keen to acquire his services, but he's been happy with his choice from the two options.

In his short time at Adelaide City, Breaden has seen coaches come and go.

The Squad is: Anthony Breaden (Adelaide City), Brett Emerton (Sydney Olympic), Lindsay Wilson (Canberra Cosmos), Simon Colosimo (Carlton SC), Eddy Bosnar (Northern Spirit), Paul Wearne (Northern Spirit), Jason Culina (Sydney Olympic), Vincenzo Grella (Empoli) Italy, Marco Bresciano (Carlton SC), John Maisano (Westerlo) Belgium, Mile Sterjovski (Sydney United), David Terminello (Adelaide City), Michael Cunico (Northern Spirit), Daniele Inviolabile (Marconi Fairfield), Christian Care (Marconi Fairfield), Joel Griffiths (Sydney

United), Mark Byrnes (NSW Academy), Michael Turnbull (AIS).

On Standby are: Adriano Cuzzupe (South Melbourne), Travis Dodd (Adelaide City), Ivan Ergic (AIS), Michael Ferrante (West Ham) UK, Martin John (Melbourne Knights), Matthew Langdon (Northern Spirit), Paul Reid (Wollongong Wolves), Nick Sabljak (Adelaide City), Michael Santalab (Sydney United), Tynan Scope (Coventry City) UK, Brad Swancott (Newcastle Breakers), Daniel Watkins (Northern Spirit).

"Once I knew that Jason wasn't going overseas at the start of the season, it allowed me to concentrate on making the national team, that was the big aim."

A career overseas hasn't really entered the thoughts of Breaden just yet.

"First, I want to establish myself as Adelaide City's number one 'keeper."

"Then if something comes up overseas, so be it. But I want to establish myself here in Australia first."

Breaden won a scholarship from the South Australian

He was signed by John Perin, but never played under him, then played for John Nyskohus and has, for nearly six months now, been with legendary Adelaide City coach, Zoran Matic.

"He's a good coach," he said. "He's a fairly hard taskmaster."

Breaden says he's not intimidated by Matic, but he may be shortly, if Zoran reads the next few lines.

"He tries to come across as a mean man. You can't be scared of him, he's just a big pussycat" is Breaden's

frank analysis of Matic.

Breaden, who plays mostly in the Zebras youth team, got the chance earlier in the year to sample some international football in preparation for the World Youth Championships.

He went on loan to Marconi to take part in the prestigious Viareggio Youth Tournament in which they made it to the quarter-finals before bowing out to Croatian club Varteks.

Breaden rates the 2-2 draw with Perugia in the group stage and the whole experience as one of the highlights of his life. "It was an unbelievable experience, sensational. I learnt so much even in that short space playing against the quality of players that we did."

The next big tournament after the World Youth Championships is the Olympic Games, next year. Breaden will be 21, and concedes it would be difficult to make the squad.

"There may be a chance for me to make it. All the others, like Danny Milosevic, are an age group above me. You never know, if I play well in Nigeria, I might get a look in. It would be magic, a dream to get into the squad."

Good luck to all the Young Socceroos.

• Vote for Soccer! Channel 7 is running a poll on football. At last count AFL was 33%, Soccer 32 and Rugby League 14%. Vote by going to <http://www.seven.com.au> and go down and vote for the World Game. One vote per E-mail address, spread the word to all your friends because we want to win, and win well!

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AT

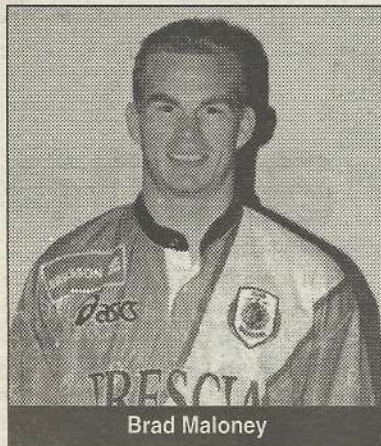
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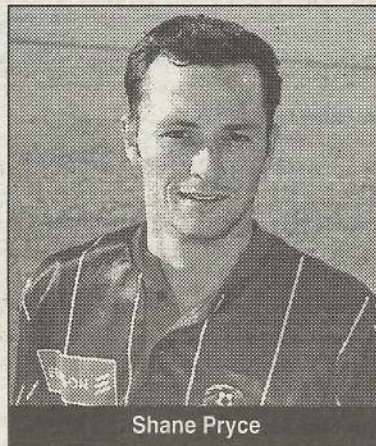
Brad Maloney



Vlado Zoric



John Buonavoglia



Shane Pryce

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Australian News

THE ROCKY ROAD

By Bonnie Mersiades

Rockhampton in central Queensland is about as deep into rugby league territory that you can get. It is a city which has concrete bulls, complete with concrete appendages, at its highway entry points to let you know that it's the beef capital of Australia.

Legend has it that the first words of many of its local babies are "Queenslander, Queenslander" in training for their first State of Origin rugby league match.

Despite this, Rockhampton and the surrounding areas - like many of Australia's regional and rural centres - enjoys a flourishing and growing interest in real football with thousands and thousands of junior players who are keen to play and learn.

It's a fact of life that rural kids do not have the same opportunity to services as city kids, which is one of the reasons why Rockhampton-born, Brisbane Strikers' utility player, Jeromy Harris, was the first to volunteer to do coaching clinics in country areas in the last off-season.

"I remember what it's like to grow up in places like that. You hear about things that happen in Brisbane or other big cities, but you don't get to experience them unless you're very lucky," said Jeromy.

"The demand for the coaching clinics was overwhelming and I had a great time. All the kids were so keen and would do anything they were asked."

Jeromy moved around country Queensland as a youngster and didn't start playing football till he was ten years old when he joined Frenchville Sports Club. Although he played all other sports on offer, he stayed with soccer despite the temptation of cricket as a Queensland Schoolboys representative.

"I guess I stayed with football because I started making representative teams from early on, and also because I really enjoyed the game."

In fact, it was in an Under 12 Central Queensland representative side, that Jeromy met Strikers' newcomer, Stuart McLaren.

Scottish-born, McLaren spent many of his early years in Rockhampton until he returned to Scotland to further his football career. He started with the Strikers this season after a few years in Hong Kong.

In Queensland teams from Under 13 to Under 16, Jeromy and Stuart also met another current team mate, Clint Bolton, from Bundaberg - also in Central Queensland.

After finishing Year 12 in 1992, Jeromy made a move to Sydney on a scholarship system with Marconi.

"Frank Arok (then Marconi coach) saw me playing at a coaching clinic in Rocky, and invited me to join the squad."

"It was quite a thrill for me, being only 17, and not having had an awful lot of exposure or experience to be invited to join Australia's best club at the time," he said.

Jeromy's three and a half years at Marconi had its ups and downs. He had two good years in the national youth league, as leading goalscorer in both seasons, and had a couple of call-ups for the senior side in this time.

In 1994-95, he played six games (scoring one goal) in the senior side under coach, Andre Icardi, before being sidelined for most of the 1995-96 season with a double hernia.

"I spent twelve weeks getting over the first one, and then had to have another operation which put me out for another twelve weeks. It wrote off the season for me."

While with Marconi he also managed to graduate from the University of NSW with a Sports Science degree in Exercise Physiology.

"Marconi were good with things like this. They encouraged me to study, and as long as I kept passing, they met my HECS fees. That is more than many employers do!"

"But having missed the 1995-96 season, I didn't really figure in Manfred Schaefer's plans at all and I knew it was time to move on."

Without an offer from any NSL club, Jeromy decided to return to Brisbane and take his chances with the Strikers.

"I rang Frank (Farina) and he told me to come along and train with the squad, and if he thought he could use me, we could talk. It was a good squad in 1996-97, with experience right through the middle of the park. We all felt good, even when we had a mid-season slump."



Jeromy Harris with his many Queensland fans.

Jeromy played twelve games in the 1996-97 season, mostly in midfield, and also came off the bench in the Strikers' memorable Grand Final victory in May 1997.

"It was an amazing day and a momentous occasion to play in front of all those people in Australia - in fact, in Brisbane! - and win. I will never forget it!"

By contrast, 1997-98 was disappointing.

"We had a bad start, with key players out for ten weeks or so, and our playmaker (Kasey Wehrman) virtually out for the season. When you lose seven of your first eight games, it's pretty difficult to play catch-up football."

"Fortunately, we're having a good season this year. While we've shot ourselves in the foot a few times, we're not in a bad position and we're confident we've got a good chance to be in the play-offs."

Jeromy has figured strongly in coach, John Kosmina's plans and has filled positions up-front, out wide and at the back as he's needed to do so. He's also scored five goals, including two spectacular headers to delight the Suncorp Stadium crowd.

He says his mum has been the biggest influence on his career.

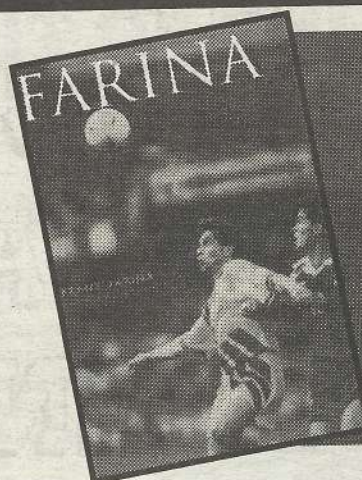
"She's always encouraged me, especially when I had the year off through injury."

As well as training, playing and coaching, Jeromy has undertaken further study at QUT, worked in a gym, branched out on his own doing personal training, and has also undertaken a Swedish massage course.

For the time being, he is concentrating on his football. "I'm feeling highly motivated and want to do my part for the team to make it into the finals. If we make it, all the others should watch out, because we know what to do once we're there!" said Jeromy.

With his contract with the Strikers due to expire at the end of the current season, Jeromy is making no plans beyond the off-season break when he hopes to have a holiday in Europe.

"I enjoy doing the country clinics, but I've been going non-stop without a break for over two years and I know it's best if I take some time out after the end of May. I know the road to Rocky though and, wherever I end up, I'll be back!"



WIN FANTASTIC SOCCER BOOKS FOR FREE!

It's time to give you, dear readers, the opportunity to win some truly special soccer books - one from overseas and one from Australia.

The first one is *My World Is Round*, by Soccer legend Frank Farina. And guess what. The man himself has personally autographed the copy we are giving away!!

The book is brilliant, recounting the life and times of Farina, his national career and his club days, from Belgium to Italy's Serie A, and all in between. It's well-written and most entertaining. It is published by Vox Peritus.

You can see it also on the netsite: www.dymocks.com.au

We have one copy to give away. Plus, the winner also receives a great Marconi poster with this book.

The second offering is *The Soccer Goalkeeper Handbook*. Superbly written by Alex Welsh, with a foreword by legendary ex-Arsenal keeper Bob Wilson, this English book is ideal for keepers of all ages. It is distributed by Lothian books at the rrp of \$55, and is available at all good bookstores.

We have three copies of this book to be given to our readers.

Both competitions are open till March 15. We will pull out the



winners on day and print the winners in

March 16 issue. Prizes are sent that week.

One envelope per competition. Put your name and address and phone number on the back. The address to send to is Soccer Weekly, 7 Garners Marrickville, NSW 2204.

Mark your envelope either Frank Farina Competition, or Soccer Goalkeeping Competition. ONE ENVELOPE PER COMPETITION.



Frank Farina's personal playing history, *My world is round*, is one of the most significant books on Australian football to date.

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Tony Moran, *The Farr Post* fanzine

"Every parent or coach should buy this book for their children or players ... It's an honest, well-written and appealing account, as only Frank could do it."

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Roger Sleeman, *Soccer Time* magazine

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Australian News

WIN FREE SPIRIT GEAR!!

How would you like to win your very own Northern Spirit shirt absolutely free!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Well, you can. Thanks to our mates at Grace Bros Sporting Edge at Warringah Mall, one lucky reader will win the Northern Spirit home shirt for free. And for the runners up we have two Northern Spirit baseball caps, one for each runner-up.

We are happy to announce that this store has taken Soccer on in a big way, and the fans have responded to make Soccer the fastest selling sport at the store.

And the staff love their Soccer, so what more could a World Game fan want. They stock literally heaps of Soccer gear, it's a proverbial paradise.

- Northern Spirit: Jerseys (adults & kids sizes) Polos & Shirts, Flags, Caps, Stubbie holders
- Marconi/Sydney Olympic Polo shirts, Balls, Caps
- Sydney Utd, Perth Glory South Melbourne Jerseys



Grace Bros Sporting Edge at Warringah Mall has a massive range of Soccer, and the staff love the World Game. So see Colin, Grant, Angela and Gay and tell 'em Soccer Weekly sent you!

- Socceroos Jerseys adults/kids sizes
- International Jerseys such as Germany, England, Scotland, France, Holland, USA, Spain etc.
- Manchester Utd Home/Away/Third and longleeve home shirt, plus Chelsea, Celtic

- A huge range of Umbro training jerseys, and umbro shorts in a big range of colours. Plus more on the way

And don't forget Grace Bros City store (level 4) has a great range of Soccer gear, including the polo shirts from Sydney Olympic and Marconi. And don't worry, if you live a distance from the Warringah Shopping Centre, any Grace Bros in Sydney will get the gear from another store if need be.

To win this great competition simply do this: send in an envelope to OH BABY! WANT MY SPIRIT SHIRT COMP, SOCCER WEEKLY, 7 GARNERS AVE, MARRICKVILLE, NSW, 2204.

First prize is a Northern Spirit home shirt (XL). Second and third prize is a Northern Spirit baseball cap. We will draw the prizes soon, so get your entries in as quick as you can. One envelope per person.

Read Soccer Weekly next week for closing date details.

Met the stars **this Thursday** at Grace Bros Sporting Edge, Warringah Mall. See live in person Northern Spirit's Clayton Zane (right), Phil Moss, Robbie Enes and Gabriel Mendez. Call 99389111 and ask for the Sporting Edge dept for more details.



KEEGAN SIGNS SOCCEROO

By Roy Hay

Steve Horvat's dreams of playing in the English Premier League may have been enhanced even though he has changed club and dropped down a division.

He has signed a two and half year contract with Kevin Keegan's Fulham, currently on top of the Nationwide Division Two.

Horvat went to England on a four-year contract at Crystal Palace in the Nationwide Division One on a promise from former Socceroo coach Terry Venables that Palace was aiming for the Premiership.

By the time Horvat got his work-permit, Palace was on the verge of parting company with Venables, and the club's financial problems saw it offload a galaxy of stars including Attilio Lombardo.

New man Steve Coppell has preferred another Australian Craig Moore in central defence, though the chances are that Moore will be moving soon as Palace tries to reduce its debt.

Consequently Horvat never kicked a ball in the senior Palace team, but luckily Keegan invited the 28-year-old Australian to trial at Fulham.

Keegan is also the current England manager and the club is backed by Mohammed Al-Fayed owner of Harrods, who is bankrolling the club in push to join the elite.

Horvat's contract has an escape clause if a bigger club comes in for him or Fulham does



not rise as it plans.

What is particularly critical for Horvat is that his work permit to play in England is in jeopardy.

To obtain it he had to fulfil the criterion of playing in 75 per cent of Australia's internationals, while to retain it he has to be a regular in the first team of the club which employs him.

The longer his absence from senior soccer goes on the more vulnerable he becomes to not having the long-delayed permit renewed.

Meanwhile, Craig Moore and Craig Foster both played full games as Crystal Palace won 1-0 at home to Barnsley midweek.

Melbourne Sports Books

New Soccer Books & Videos

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2. Teddy Sheringham My Autobiography	\$50
3. Ron Atkinson 'Big Ron'	\$50
4. Stand up if you hate Manchester United	\$50
5. The Final Score: Fashanu, Segers and Grobbelaar	\$50
6. The Diary of Darren Tackle	\$25
7. European Football Y/book 1998/99	\$80
8. Harry Redknapp My Autobiography	\$60
9. Premier League Players' Record 1946/1998	\$65
10. Studs Up Australia's only fanzine Jan 99 edition	\$3
11. Vinnie Jones' New Book	\$50
12. Johann Cruyff: New Book	\$50
13. Ferenc Puskas: New Book	\$35
14. David Beckham: My Story	\$35
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16. Tony Adams: Addicted	\$50
17. Glenn Hoddle: World Cup Diary	\$50
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19. Diego Maradona: Hand of God	s/back \$20 h/back \$40
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Australian Features

David Hardaker's thesis ... How do I love thee? Let me count the ways ... Is it somehow sick that a 41 year old man might be pondering this question not in relation to his wife, but football?

I love the curve of your ball, the way your net falls so seductively on your posts, the way your cool white lines leave their mark on my shorts and my socks, scrubbing it off when I get home like lipstick off a collar ...

I love the way you tease me and torment me — the way you let me dominate for 80 minutes, then finally give me the satisfaction of scoring with just minutes left. Though I must confess there are days my love for you has turned to hate when against the odds you have surrendered to other men who did not deserve to win you.

If football is a lover, then I have met my partner for life.

For me the romance began exactly 35 years ago now. And I can't think of anything else I have been involved with for so long that still excites me as much as that first day.

I was just six then — and as soon as I was strapped into my boots and had the orange and white top of mighty Umina pulled on I suddenly felt ten feet tall.

Back then on the Central Coast of NSW (Umina is right near Gosford) soccer was a passport to another world ... a world where we played against the kids of newly arrived migrants with their exotic ways ... a world where one day you might journey to Sydney to play the city kids (SCARY) ... a world where the coach once played for Manchester United juniors. He had washed up to start a new life in the sticks, but still approached every game as though he were back at Old Trafford.

Rugby League had its bubble gum cards with Aussie icons like Reg Gasnier and Johnny Raper. But soccer had Boys Own annuals with the real life stories of George Best, Bobby Charlton ... it was so different — and I loved it.

As I grew up and eventually played a couple of years in the NSW State League (before a cruel groin injury came along) the story remained the same ... as you approached Croatia's home ground at Bossley Park you entered another world — a world of patriotic flags and high passion, a new world of exotic foods and dare I say, unpronounceable names. But wonder of wonders, when the whistle

blew you were all the same — just like when Umina took on the boys from Budgewoi.

And that coach back at Umina who once played for Manchester United juniors? Who knows whether he did or didn't ... but I met a lot more like him, too. In fact, it seemed like every bloke I played with at Ku-ringai or Manly used to be this and used to be that, back in Scotland or England.

Now here they were, at the

corner of the net, or faking a move left, taking the ball to the right and knocking a 40 yard through ball to the left wing.

But when I pull on the red, white and blue of Kissing Point (on Sydney's north shore) I immediately feel not so much ten feet tall, as three inches trimmer around the waist.

Still it's the same story ... whether computer programmer,

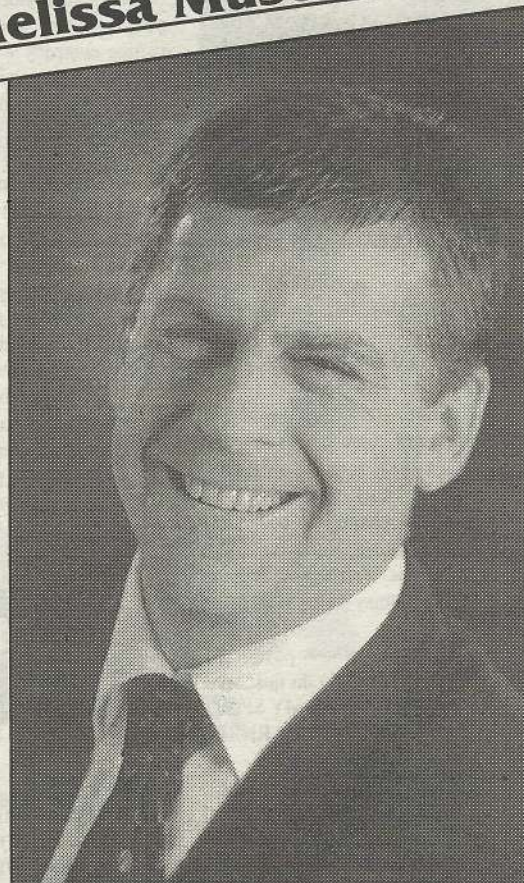
gardener, insurance rep or (like me) a journalist, once that whistle blows we're all the same.

And still there are the blokes who used

WHY

I LOVE SOCCER?

How does one answer that? Journalist with ABC TV's 7.30 Report, David Hardaker, and University student Melissa Muscat, argue the case ...



David Hardaker ... former 60 Minutes producer, Walkley award nominated journalist, ex-Soccer Star (!) and long-time Soccer fan.

to be this and used to be that — the blokes who played for Hakoah or Marconi — and a couple who once in the long distant past pulled on the green and gold of the Socceroos.

We all talk about how we used to play and remember the times we threw up out the car window after a night at the Apia club.

Ah! Dreams become memories, hopes become triumphs past. They they all come alive just one more time on Saturday afternoon.

The games are still too short, the weekends still can't come fast enough. And I'm sure I can still smash the perfect volley from 30 yards, leaving the goalkeeper grasping at air as the ball strains the back of the net.

And next year, if I really work on my fitness, I reckon the sky's the limit ...

Melissa Muscat's thesis ... It was late Sunday afternoon, I had just entered Brandon Park, home of the Wollongong Wolves.

Immediately the distant chants of both the Spirit and Wolves fans set the scene for what was promising to be an enticing game.

Observing the Northern hill of the stadium, it appeared that from the haze of white, the regular supporters were once again out in numbers. On the Southern hill, however, not much more than a handful of Soccer spectators.

Appropriately, a grandstand was filled with a more civilised crowd. Young families and children waiting to see their heroes in action.

Some of the fathers and sons wearing jerseys of the team a player they were barracking for. The parents at the entertainment seemed like

eternity whilst waiting for the game to begin. Finally the team emerge from the tunnel and the crowd erupts. The game begins. The long distance I had travelled to watch my team was immediately forgotten.

From the first blow of the whistle this game promised to be anything but boring. As both teams struggled for ascendancy I found myself sitting on the edge of my seat.

It was still early stages of the game but already Wollongong was beginning to dominate. The next thing I knew the stadium was overcome by the roar of Wollongong supporters.

A sea of red and white flags obstructed my view of what was happening on the field.

There is nothing like a goal to get fans going. Wollongong supporters were proudly singing familiar tunes praising their team. The look of delight on the faces turning to pure bliss shortly after with a second goal.

As hopes began to fade, my spirit (pardon the pun!) were miraculously lifted. The goal I thought would never come had finally arrived. My doubt disappearing almost immediately suddenly found myself off my seat, hunched, cheering like the die-hard fans was surrounded by.

The look of pure bliss was now on the faces of the Spirit fans. Both Wollongong and Spirit supporters had their share of glory with five goals resulting from the match.

Regardless of the outcome of the game the feeling experienced when the team you are supporting scores, is literally indescribable. It is easy to see how it can get carried away and how it can change the mood of the game spontaneously.

It is the atmosphere these fans create which makes soccer the sport it is today which makes me proud to be a soccer supporter.



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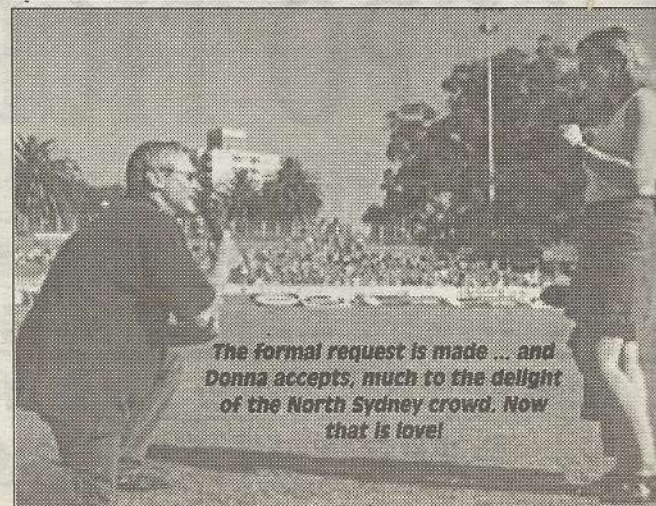
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THE ROMANCE OF SOCCER. NOW THAT'S LOVE THAT'S SOCCER!



Some love the game so much they feel compelled to incorporate it into their love life. 'Paul' wanted 'Donna's' hand in marriage. So, while at Spirit, he got ever so romantic.



The formal request is made ... and Donna accepts, much to the delight of the North Sydney crowd. Now that is love!

Australian Features

FINALLY, IS THIS THE YEAR OF OLYMPIC?

SOCCER SPICE'S ERICSSON CUP



So what makes this year so special you ask? Well this season the staff at UTS Sydney Olympic have made a huge effort to ensure the success of the club.

They have spiced up the soccer scene in Samba South American style with their Brazilian pre-match, during the match and half-time entertainment (I am wearing my Brazil shirt (right) in their honour!) they have set the printers on fire with the production of thousands of copies of the most attractive face in the Ericsson Cup (yep, the Pablo faces rated highly!), and to add to all that, the club has also turned professional which has seen them adopt a fresh, new attitude.

So, are things a lot clearer now?

Is that 100watt light bulb shining brighter at the end of the tunnel? Can you SEE why I am of the belief that 1999 could be the year of Olympic?

OK, I concede though, that Olympic haven't won the title since the 1989/90 sea-

highly commended for its achievements (or rather lack of achievements) during finals time (so they didn't make the top six last year — big deal!).

Injured defender Adam Ciantar has also been impressed with his teammates' form in the past few weeks and has tapped into his captain's way of thinking — that they could

Now, obviously Olympic are not the only contenders for the illustrious title of Ericsson Cup champions — but who else could be in the returning?

"Perth and South Melbourne are very impressive" Tsekenis mused, "Souths are a very good side and manage to get results even when they are not at their best, and Perth would be great especially if they could manage to get a home grand final."

Teammate Ciantar shared a similar view but also rated Adelaide City, Marconi and Sydney United in with a good chance.

"Adelaide City always excels as the season veers towards the finals. Sydney United always tend to rise to the occasion and I feel Marconi are like the dark horse coming in." (Neigh!) Once more, who knows?

Soccer Weekly's UK writer Craig Wilson, who has seen every Olympic home game this year, has even predicted a top two finish

Unfortunately, not even I, Soccer Spice, and my football-femmes are able to provide

you with an answer as to whom could be receiving the olive wreaths on Mount Hindmarsh, Mount Lakeside or Mount Belmore.

But we do however know that after

The Year 2000 may forever be known as the year of the Sydney Olympics, however 1999 could be the year of the National League's 'Sleeping Giants', as Sydney Olympic appear to have finally woken up on the right side of the bed. With a rare squad consisting of much talent, 1999 could well be shaping up into the year Branko Culina and Frank Arok's troops graduate to be major contenders for the Ericsson Cup title...

Regardless, we will "stick our heads out" and postulate that this year the Sydney Olympic team and its somewhat renowned part-time supporters (who get going when the going gets tough), will find their pot of gold (or maybe that should be "gold medal"?)

So now you are probably wondering

go all the way this year.

"We have a great defence, with the likes of big names such as Mehmed, Milan and Ante Juric. And Scott Thomas has also been in such good form. The defence has played a big role in getting the team where they are."

Ciantar also acknowledges the impressive form of keeper George Bouhoutsos and the way Peter Tsekenis "leads his troops" from the midfield, as reasons for the team's recent good run of results. (Falcons expected!)

But like Tsekenis and the rest of Australia he also shows appreciation of Cardozo's efforts at the other end of the park.

He is not however oblivious to the recent performances of Cardozo's quiet partner up-front, Norman Tome, who has started improving.

"Norman's coming back into form now and this has improved our odds of winning the league title. It has also taken some of the pressure off Pablo."

Pressure? What pressure?! Does one think that when every person in a crowd of around of five thousand is masking themselves with a photocopied picture of your face there would be any pressure to perform? As if! (not).

So what exactly did Pablo think of the faces? Well Adam Ciantar, informed us of the modest nature of the nation's top striker. "He was not too impressed. He was actually a little embarrassed as he is very modest."

"It was however, good crowd involvement."

The absence of youngsters and Australian representatives Jason Culina and Brett Emerton, as they embark on an overseas career and national team duty, could admittedly have injured the team.

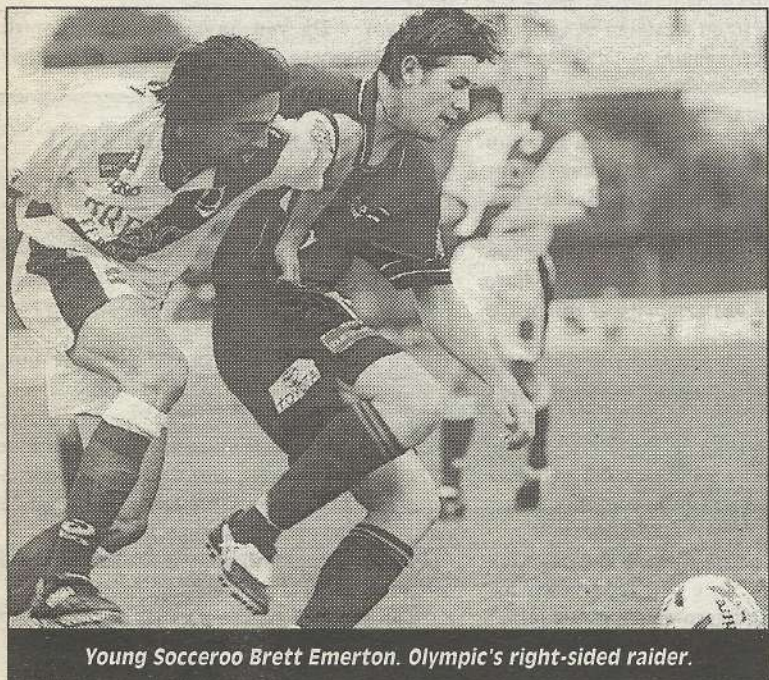
As "Tseka" enlightened us, "It took time for the team to learn to play together and now with the departure of Brett and Jason we have to go through another similar period."

However, the exit of Culina and Emerton, just prior to the critical part of the season, has not caused major panic in the Olympic camp as, such is the depth of the squad, there are many capable replacements.

"You could see Scotty Thomas moving into a more attacking role," Ciantar pointed out "and also Carlos Gonzalez."

Nineteen year old Peter Zorbas, who only made his debut in the Ericsson Cup two weeks ago could also earn himself a more permanent place in the first grade squad leading up to the finals.

Adrian Cervinski was also mentioned as a fill-in. Who knows?



Young Soccerroo Brett Emerton. Olympic's right-sided raider.

son when they defeated Marconi (their first and only league title), and I concede that the Olympic of past years is by no means to be

why? Why does Monday come before Tuesday? Why is the sky blue? Why do I think 1999 could be the year of Olympic?

As club captain Tsekenis pointed out to me, they are solid all around the pitch. "We were lacking in defence but now we have Mehmed Durakovic and Milan Blagojevic with us, who are both excellent and experienced defenders."

"And with Pablo up front, together with Norman how can we go wrong — the goalscorers' chart speaks for itself." (We will however omit the fact that Pablo missed that penalty against South Melbourne a week ago — on X-file surely!).

My theory is that he saw his own face in the crowd, which caused his neurons to elapse into a state of shock, in turn his feet received mixed messages and as a result the ball hit the crossbar — so there!

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Australian Features



Welcome Amigos. We are The Four Diegos: Let's Samba, Let's Rumba, Let's La Bamba, Let's Salza down the Copacobana with sombreros on our head. Let's welcome Socceroo and Perth Glory dynamo ... Robbie Trajkovski



Diegos: "You seem to be over the serious groin complaint that has severely curtailed your appearances with the Glory this season. We all know that the groin is a particularly sensitive area. Did your surgeon adopt the time honoured, Lorraina Bobbit 'Rusty Scissor Slash and Stitch' approach or the more caring, Marilyn Monroe 'Diamonds are a Girl's Best Friend' approach to your hernia surgery?"

Trajkovski: "It was definitely the Marilyn Monroe technique. There were no rusty scissors involved, only tender loving hands. The injury got progressively worse during pre-season and really

SHARPIE ROB GIVING GLORY THE EDGE



Robbie Trajkovski ... 'Sharpie' is back in form for the Glory.

flared up while I was with the Socceroos.

"After my first game for Glory I had scans done to diagnose the problem. I kept playing for six weeks until the club and I decided that I should have an operation.

"I've been happy with my recovery even though I haven't reached full fitness yet."

Diegos: "Your nickname is Sharpie. Were you given this name because:

(a) Of the constant sharp pain in your groin?

(b) You're sharper than John Markovski at Trivial Pursuit?

(c) Of your sharp raids up and down the Perth Oval flanks?

(d) Of your sharp moves on the disco dance floor?

Trajkovski: "I won't say discos because I'm a happily married man. I'll have to go for option (C) because the groin feels fine and John Markovski won't like it if I say I'm better than him at Trivial Pursuit."

Diegos: "You left a

successful club, Carlton last season to join Glory, an outfit definitely on the way up. How have you settled in and what are the main differences between both organisations?"

Trajkovski: "Perth really is a different class, even though both are professional clubs. At Glory the coach has a mandate to do whatever he wants to. What he says goes. I really enjoy my training in Perth and as a result I enjoy my football."

Diegos: "Last season, you and John Markovski played in a losing Grand final with Carlton against South Melbourne. Another Glory teammate of yours, Con Boutsianis, controversially scored the winner for South in the dying minutes of that game. Does the debate still rage about the legitimacy of that goal and have you and John plotted any campaign of revenge as a pay back to Con?"

Trajkovski: "Con has admitted that he did do something that maybe influenced the result. But I must say that that is all in the past. We are at a new club now as teammates and other than the practical jokes in the showers after training, there are no plans for our mate, Con. But perhaps he shouldn't get too complacent."

Diegos: "The team went through a slump while you were out injured. Since your return there has been a corresponding improvement in the team's results. Is it a case of 'Don't worry boys, Sharpie's back' or are there other factors that have led to Glory's improved form?"

Trajkovski: "Unfortunately we lost four games in a

row when I first came back from injury. So you say I did have an effect but not the one the tea looking for. Every team goes through a slump ours has been in January. Its good to get it out way now during the regular season rather than finals."

Diegos: "Do you have a message for fanatical Glory supporters out there in the s

Quotes from The Four Diegos Files

Quote taken from a Four Diegos interview with the frustrated coach of an Ericsson team shellacked by Glory in Perth recently.

"It was so bad, my travel agent called with a manoeuvre and I wrote it down."

Trajkovski: "Keeping cheering. There is better than having the crowd behind me when running up and down those wings."

Diegos: "Thanks Sharpie. We're feeling sore in the groin at the moment."

"Can you give us the number of that with the Marilyn Monroe hands? Adios Amigos."

Trajkovski: "Thanks Diegos. That's surprising thought you guys would be the 'rusty scissors' Adios Amigos."

Last week we posed the question: who is that kiddie now playing in the Ericsson Cup of Life? Did you guess it was Carlton's NZ international, and hardman defender, Sean Douglas? For those who did, go to the top of the class for Soccer Weekly's Australian Soccer History unit. Keep sending in the pictures of Ericsson Cup stars when they were little tackers, we love seeing them!



Carlton's Sean Douglas: above and left.

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Australian Features



The Four Diegos continue their VW Combi Van tour of the world by dropping in on Soccerroo and Manchester City star ... Danny Tiatto



Diegos: "Your rise to prominence in Australian Soccer was almost Rocky Balboa-like. You went from the relative obscurity of the Victorian State league, to the national league, to Olyroo and Soccerroo representation, all in the space of 18 months. Your soccer journey has taken you to Italy, Switzerland and England."

controversial and often tempestuous, Noel Gallagher. "Have you had the pleasure of meeting the band and given your aggressive nature on the park, has Noel ever asked you to join the band and perhaps add a little more aggro to their press conferences?"

Tiatto: "The team haven't met him yet but we are aware that he comes to most of our games. I think I'll

Are you a bit surprised by the reaction of the English to your 'Take No Prisoners' style of play?"

Tiatto: "It has been a little bit difficult. I've been sent off twice this season and in my opinion, I only deserved one of the two red cards. Whenever anyone, especially an Aussie, gets sent off in England, the press blows it totally out of proportion. Unfortunately these stories

Diegos: "Every Aussie kid's dream is to earn thousands of pounds a week playing soccer professionally overseas. Can you become financially secure playing in the second division in England and when you retire, will we see you wearing diamond rings, gold chains, an open neck body shirt smoking a big fat cigar, cruising down Lygon street in a

TYRO TIATTO FINDS HIS FOOTBALL OASIS AT MAN CITY

"Rocky knocked out Apollo Creed in 'Rocky II' to become world champion, how far do you feel you can go?"

Tiatto: "At the moment everything is going well. I'm really enjoying myself with Manchester City. I enjoyed my time in Italy as well but at this point, I'd like to continue my career in England with the view of eventually coming home to settle."

Diegos: "In Manchester it's the United boys that seem to be the ones who get to go out with the Spice Girls, drive flashy cars and make obscene amounts of money. The City boys on the other hand, appear to do it tough, without as much glamour, trappings and having little or no chance with the Spice Girls. What's it like in a city like Manchester and playing for Manchester City?"

Tiatto: "Well that's very much the perception people have about Manchester City around the world but if you spend time in Manchester you'll realise that this is not the case. The majority of 'City' supporters live in Manchester whereas many of the 'United' supporters come from outside the city. They tend to be the people who choose United because they are a winning team. It's really weird. It seems that everyone living in Manchester hates Manchester United, and would rather follow 'City'."

Diegos: "A huge supporter of Manchester City is the rock band 'Oasis', of course fronted by the

steer clear of the band though because I don't like their music. We get free tickets to their concerts but I must admit there aren't too many Manchester City players who are keen to attend."



Tiatto (c) with fellow Olyroos of the 96 campaign, Gabriel Mendez and Peter Tsekenis (r).

Diegos: "In May last year, Aston Villa manager, John Gregory seemed to be keen on signing you. Unfortunately the deal didn't go through. That must have been hugely disappointing for you?"

Tiatto: "Yes it was. Towards the end of the season when I was with Stoke City, the Villa manager, John Gregory asked me to play in a testimonial against Port Vale for Aston Villa. At the end of the season I had a slight hamstring injury but on the strength of that performance he asked me to come back during pre-season to have a trial."

"The Manchester City manager, Joe Royle was also pretty excited about me and made a concrete offer. I felt that with my injury, the fact that I didn't want to go on another trial and that Manchester City was a big and ambitious club, I decided against the Villa offer and came straight to Manchester, and I haven't regretted it since."

Diegos: "The battles between Manchester City and Millwall this season have been akin to Civil war with pitch invasions, ripping out of seats and running battles with police. What has brought about the bad feeling between the clubs and as a player do you get worried playing in the type of environment?"

Tiatto: "Opposition teams get wound up playing against us because we are a big club. Millwall supporters are generally regarded as undesirable and, with my club also having crazy supporters, there was always a chance of something nasty occurring. I actually played in the game with all the trouble and ended up getting five stitches in my ear. The next time we played them I was desperate to get stuck in and clean a few of them up. Happily I got my chance and I did."

Diegos: "The British like to regard themselves as a resilient bunch, a tough lot who live hard, drink hard and play hard. It seems though, at times, it is the Aussie players like Kevin Muscat and yourself, who teach the English what real aggression is all about."

tend to make their way back home where the real story gets distorted."

Diegos: "We know for a fact that the English think that the Diegos are a touch 'Il Loco'. What about the players from down-under, do they think that they're all loose cannons and a little mad?"

Tiatto: "I think most of the boys that come over to play in England usually have that reputation. The likes of Andy Bernal, Kevin Muscat and myself are probably regarded as the hard men from down-under. But we enjoy it and it's all good fun."

Diegos: "In the Diegos' opinion, it's only a matter of time before you play in the English Premiership with a big club. But you have had to, in the meantime, do your apprenticeship in the bread and salami league, the Italian Serie B with Salernitana, and now in the bangers and mash league, Division 2 with Manchester City in England. You've had to do it hard in both competitions. How do both leagues compare?"

Tiatto: "In Italy the game is much more tactically based. It was much harder to get a turn and shot on target and it was difficult to take on players because often the defenders were as quick as the forwards. As soon as I came to England, I found it much easier. I found that I had a bit more time on the ball and the attacking long ball style of play suited me. The physical nature of the English game was something I quickly came to terms with."

Diegos: "As everyone knows, the Diegos are finely tuned athletes who work pretty hard to perfect their skills for cut throat Aussie backyard and beach soccer competitions. How differently do players in both Italy and England train?"

Tiatto: "When I was in Italy I felt I trained much harder. The standard in England is improving however, with all clubs training twice a day. In the past this wasn't always the case. The players are adopting a higher level of professionalism which means that many of them don't go out nowadays, and get as drunk as they have in the past."

Diegos: "You are in a unique situation in that you have played in both Italy and England. At present we have Olyroo, Vinnie Grella over in Italy with Empoli, Paul Okon is with Lazio and many years ago, we had Frank Farina with Bari. What sort of reception do players from Australia get from Italian coaches, players and spectators in general?"

Tiatto: "Being Australian, it was hard to get acceptance from the Italian public initially. Having said that, as soon as they got to know what I was capable of and that I held an Italian passport, it did make things a lot easier."

Diegos: "Do they test you out with a 'Double Short Black' to see if you could take it?"

Tiatto: "They did try it but unfortunately, I ended up throwing up."

custom made Danny Tiatto Porsche?"

Tiatto: "Manchester City is a big club in England and the financial part of it, I must admit, is great. It's a terrific way to earn a living, especially in the UK. When

The Four Diegos are radio celebrities and soccer scribes on Melbourne's Stereo 97.4 FM Saturday 10 am-12 midday.

E-Mail 'The Diegos' on FourDiegos@bigpond.com

Until next time ... Adios Amigos!

I get home, as long as I live by the beach and go surfing everyday, I'll be happy. Bell's Beach is just the place I'd like to be."

Diegos: "Thanks Danny. Don't worry about going out with a Spice Girl. When you come back to Australia we'll set you up with some hot dates — the salacious Garlic Girls. They can't wait! Adios Amigo."

Tiatto: "Thanks Diegos. I'll take you up on that offer. I hope they're just hot and not hot and smelly. Adios Amigos!"

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UK professional Danny Tiatto ... "it's a terrific way to earn a living." However the young Aussie does not like Oasis.

SOCCER WOMAN

WITH JANENE MAR IN CANBERRA

New Matilda Peita-Claire Hepperlin says she's just "taking one step at a time", but at the rate the 17-year-old is moving up through the ranks, it seems reality may just be overtaking her humble goals.

Now set to make her international debut in next week's prestigious Algarve Cup in Portugal, the youngster known to everyone as 'PC' is not allowing her thoughts to drift too much further ahead despite the World Cup being just over three months away. Selection for the Algarve Cup team in itself has been a huge thrill and the highlight of her short but exciting career to date.

"I was pretty much over the moon," said Hepperlin of the announcement of her name by National Coach Greg Brown last week. "Because I wasn't expecting it, I was just heaps surprised. It wasn't appropriate to get excited there (at the team meeting), so I waited till I got home and ran around the house a few times."

Said Brown of his selection of the youngster, "Looking at the overall squad, the players injured and available, we needed someone who can play PC's position."

She plays ahead of her years, an old head on young shoulders. She proved in the (Australia B) match against Canada that she's capable of playing her normal game against very good competition. She did a great job against one of the best players in the world. So age is not an issue. She had a good national league, is in good form, and this is opportunity for her to travel with the team and gain some experience."

It was a rollercoaster couple of days for Hepperlin, a losing Ansett Summer Series grandfinalist on the Sunday with Canberra Eclipse, and named in the Australian Team the following morning. "I guess the disappointment of losing the grandfinal disappeared for me. We were happy to be minor premiers which shows consistency throughout the season. But we didn't click on the day, and SASI made it happen on their third time."

Hepperlin captained the Australian Youth Team on their Tour to Holland last October/November, and in December was named in the Olympic Athlete Program (OAP) Squad. Hepperlin has since been in training with the Matildas at the AIS, the youngest of the elite group.

"Greg described what it would be like in detail, so it was as I expected. At first I just wanted to get there and settle in, but sometimes I caught myself thinking 'Wow I'm here with all these players'. I try and force that out of my mind now we're all just players on the park."

"He said to me at the start to focus on each training session and things will come out of it. With the World Cup not far away, I've come in right where it's really intense, so it's quite a step up from the Academy. But it's good to work hard at such an

intense level. Every session I've learnt something. Training with those players around me makes it easy for me. I'm at the highest level I've ever been. I really can't complain."

Hepperlin says she is just happy playing and training for Australia and that going on tour is such a bonus. "Over the last couple of months my goals have gone up, but I try not to set myself unrealistic goals."

One step at a time, then the next, step by step. I aimed to make the Youth tour, then it was to be selected for the OAP Squad, to go on tour, and then to do that consistently."

The Australian Youth Team tour provided a valuable introduction into how the National Team program works on and off the park. Likewise Hepperlin's appearance for the Australia B Team against Canada in January held further insight and inspiration into top level international football. Hepperlin's performance up against Charmaine Hooper, one of the world's best footballers, proved her readiness for higher things.

"We had a great bunch of girls on a great tour. Just being around Chris Tanzey and how professional he is, it was like a stepping stone for me, a learning curve. To have that whole experience of travelling, as part of an elite team, and wear the Aussie badge was so great. And with the B Team, I was talking with Di Alagich who was also on Charmaine Hooper in the game, and we were just



Janene Mar looks at one of a number of talented youngsters that are ensuring our Matildas have a bright future. One of them is simply called 'PC' ...

blown away with her quality and athleticism. It was a real eye-opener into the high calibre of the players, and shows where you have to get to."

Hepperlin is excited about the Portugal tour and ready to soak everything in.

Holland was her first trip overseas, but she is not fazed to now be going away with the senior players. "Alicia (Ferguson) and Kelly (Golebiowski) are some of my best mates and both in the team. The older players I have just so much respect for, and they've

amazing transition at the highest level underlines her maturity and wonderful understanding of the game."

"I think it's a positive thing to be able to play two positions. I'm so enthusiastic about my new position, plus I can fall back into defence if necessary."

Born and bred in Canberra, Hepperlin has the distinct advantage of training at the AIS without having had to uproot from the family home.

She remains at Daramalan College, although upon selection into the OAP Squad, has this year elected to

been really good to me making me welcome into the team, which I've really appreciated. Just being in the squad amongst such quality players is a big thing for me. Plus I'm looking forward to seeing the quality of the other teams."

The majority of soccer supporters would know Hepperlin as a defender, after all that's where she has played for ACT Academy and the Canberra Eclipse since the very beginning of the Ansett Summer Series. In fact Hepperlin has always played at the back. Yet in these last few short months with the national squad, she has been transformed into a central midfielder.

She looks so comfortable in her new position despite never having played there before. Hepperlin's

undertake her Year 12 certificate rather than the full final year studies.

She undertakes three main subjects, and gains status for her football commitments, and says the college allows her to be flexible.

"I don't think with this amount of training that I could continue to do school like last year. The hardest thing is missing classes on Mondays and then always having to catch up, or going away for two weeks and having to pick it back up."

Apart from soccer and school, Hepperlin the teenager likes to spend time with her boyfriend and friends. Her boyfriend of nine months also attends Daramalan and is very understanding of the demands football places upon her time these days.

Another with an even closer understanding of PC's rising football career is older sister Danielle. The pair are the Ansett Summer Series' only sister combination, both lining up for the Canberra Eclipse. With just thirteen months age difference between them, the relationship is one which was first formed when PC took up soccer at age six because Danielle started playing.

"It's good to have someone to talk soccer with after the game," explains PC.

"She points out the good and the bad points, and me too with her. That's always a good thing to help keep your feet on the ground. A couple of times we've had like a tiff on the ground because we're so competitive, but usually we're pretty respectful of each other's ability and encouraging to each other."

Now that PC has advanced into the National Squad, Danielle remains very supportive. "Danielle can come to the game and I can still ask her and she'll tell me as a sister. She's very encouraging and enthusiastic for me."

And what of that unusual name. Actually to reveal the truth, PC's real name is simply Peita, named after her father Peter.

But the confusion between the two names was too much for the little Peita, and so her name was hyphenated with her middle name Claire. Nowadays it would seem too difficult to think of her as anything but the delightful and talented PC.

AUSSIE BID FOR WORLD CUP 2003

Australia stands a firm chance of hosting the 2003 Women's World Cup, putting forward its intention to bid to FIFA officials during the recent World Cup draw in the US.

Combining with Soccer Australia to present the formal bid, AWSA will receive shortly the FIFA documentation of bid requirements, and a bid committee will be established to get the process underway, the formal bid to be presented on 16 June.

FIFA's decision will be made at its executive meeting in December. Australia will be competing against three other nations for the honour — Brazil and Croatia also making public their interest, plus an undisclosed Asian country.

Well in Australia's favour will be that world-class facilities will be already in place following the Olympic Games, and officials would be most keen to attract top level international events to Australia after 2000.

The growing public support for the Matildas is another selling factor, home internationals in recent years attracting an average crowd of 3,500.

"We have received a lot of encouragement already from FIFA, whilst many of the countries involved in this year's World Cup are also behind us," said AWSA Chief Executive Warren Fisher. "I'm very confident of winning it."

ALGARVE TRIAL FOR WORLD CUP

The Matildas left for Portugal last Saturday as things hot up in preparation for the World Cup, the big event now a mere fourteen weeks away.

The eight-nation Algarve Cup will test Australia both mentally and physically, the annual event almost run of the mill for the other competing nations, but certainly the most prestigious event the Matildas have contested since the 1995 World Cup.

Australia has been drawn in Group B alongside China, Denmark and Portugal, with Group A consisting of the USA, Norway, Sweden and Finland.

ALGARVE CUP SCHEDULE

Sun 14 March	2.30pm	Group B	Denmark v Australia	in Faro
Tues 16 March	4.30pm	Group B	Portugal v Australia	Olhao
Thu 18 March	4.30pm	Group B	Australia v China	Montechoro
Sat 20 March	11.00am	Playoffs	4th Gp A v 4th Gp B	Montechoro
	11.00am	Playoffs	3rd Gp A v 3rd Gp B	Loule
	11.00am	Playoffs	2nd Gp A v 2nd Gp B	Quarteira
	4.00pm	Final	1st Gp A v 1st Gp B	Loule

DENMARK FIRST UP TEST

Australia's only previous international against Denmark was that fateful opening match at the 1995 World Cup. On that occasion Australia was on the wrong side of a 5-0 scoreline.

Already down by two goals, Australia was reduced to 10 players in the 30th minute with the harsh red-card send-off of defender Sonia Gegenhuber.

This time around, the contest should be a lot closer although in no way an easy task. The Danes are experienced, and typically Nordic in style — direct, strong and physical.

Their Algarve Cup team includes nine players from the 1995 World Cup including top class striker G. Krogh and renowned defender Lene Terp.

SUMMER IS... ERICSSON CUP

next round

Saturday 13 March

Marconi Fairfield v Newcastle Breakers

Marconi Stadium

Sunday 14 March

Adelaide City v Brisbane Strikers

Hindmarsh Stadium

Sydney Olympic v Adelaide Sharks

Belmore Sports Ground

Perth Glory v Gippsland Falcons

Perth Oval

Carlton SC v South Melbourne

Olympic Park

Wollongong Wolves v Sydney United

Brandon Park

Melbourne Knights v Canberra Cosmos

Cosmos

Knights Stadium

Bye: Northern Spirit

Please note, these fixtures are supplied by Soccer Australia, and are correct at time of printing. Please check local guides in case of changes. We accept no responsibility for any late changes to fixtures, or incorrect information supplied to us.

RESULTS ROUND 23

Northern Spirit 1
Adelaide City 0

Brisbane Strikers 1
Wollongong Wolves 0

Gippsland Falcons 1
Sydney Olympic 0

Sydney United 2
Melbourne Knights 1

Adelaide Sharks 2
Marconi Fairfield 3

Played Monday night
Canberra Cosmos v Carlton SC

Bye Newcastle Breakers

TABLE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
South Melbourne	21*	13	5	3	40	22	44*
Sydney United	22	13	3	6	40	28	42
Perth Glory	21*	12	3	6	46	25	39*
Northern Spirit	22	12	2	8	30	29	38
Sydney Olympic	22	10	5	7	37	27	35
Adelaide City	21	10	4	7	33	23	34
Marconi Fairfield	21	10	3	8	39	39	33
Brisbane Strikers	21	9	5	7	30	31	32
Carlton	21*	9	4	8	42	32	31*
Newcastle Breakers	21	7	6	8	21	28	27
Wollongong Wolves	21	6	6	9	32	38	24
Adelaide Sharks	21	5	6	10	31	36	21
Gippsland Falcons	21	5	5	11	14	37	20
Melbourne Knights	21	4	5	12	23	35	17
Canberra Cosmos	21*	2	2	17	15	43	8*





ERICSSON CUP

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1999

SPIRIT SHOW TRUE COLOURS

NORTHERN SPIRIT

Zane 29

ADELAIDE CITY

At North Sydney Oval, Sydney

By Bonnie Mersiades

Every time you go to North Sydney Oval, there's something new. Earlier in the season, they introduced a mobile coffee cart offering real coffee; this week, the entrepreneurial spirits (excuse the pun) who manage the coffee cart added a sweet-tasting delicacy with their coffee offer.

Where else, but Australia, could you buy a macchiato and a lamington at the same time?

Lying 5th and 6th on the Ericsson Cup table respectively, the 15,104 strong crowd needed their dose of caffeine (or alcohol) to help them through another keenly anticipated encounter between the 'new wave' and one of the powerhouse teams of the national soccer league.

Adelaide City has a strong pedigree and a proud record of achievement since the introduction of the national soccer league in 1977.

With Northern Spirit coming off a disappointing loss against Wollongong last week, and with the shock withdrawal of the influential 'King' Kres (Kresimir Marusic) and Paul 'Billy' Bilokapic due to injury at Thursday evening's training session, Northern Spirit seemed to have their work cut out for them.

"I told them that they each had a job to do and I wanted 100% commitment," said Northern Spirit coach, Graham Arnold.

"I was disappointed in the effort last week. Our discipline was poor, and our application was worse."

Following presentation of the Sydney Cup and recognition of Spirit's three Young Soccerroo representatives (Eddy Bosnar, Michael Cunico and Paul Wearne) prior to kick-off, the game was played at a fast and furious pace from the moment referee, Eddie Lennie, got proceedings underway.



Jason Petkovic ... the Soccerroo gloveman was in fine form at Spirit Friday night.

Spirit's 'keeper, Paul Henderson, was tested in the first minute when Adelaide City moved the ball quickly up to one of their two target men, Damian Mori, who made a strong strike on goal from about eight metres out. In fact, despite their reputation as the best defensive side in the League, Adelaide City played anything but defensively, with several strikes early-on.

However, even without Marusic, Northern Spirit gradually asserted their dominance in midfield, especially through the efforts of Gabriel (Chi Chi) Mendez, Ian Crook and Robert Enes — a dominance which they maintained throughout the game.

Adelaide City were often forced to pump long balls down to Mori or striking partner, Carl Veart, in the hope that they'd latch on to one of them.

But Spirit's defensive trio of Graham Arnold, Matt Bingley and Mark Rudan, were equal to the task.

Clayton Zane's match-winning goal in the 29th minute was initiated from a Luke Casserly throw-in to Mendez. Casserly curled Mendez' return into the box to a high-flying Zane whose glancing header left a despairing Petkovic stranded.

This was a moment for great rejoicing — not only for Northern Spirit and their supporters — but also for the 21 year old Zane.

It was scored at the eastern, or Fig Tree end, just in front of Northern Spirit's most vocal and colourful supporters in the Bob Stand. Some of the 'Bob Standers' were amongst Zane's most ardent critics not so long ago, but they have also been generous in applauding his turn-around in form in the past month.

Zane went on to be a menacing handful for Adelaide City's defence for the rest of the game.

It was more of the same for the remainder of the first half and the early part of the second half, with Mori looking dangerous at times whenever he managed to shake off his marker, Rudan.

Sensing that the game was slipping away from them, Adelaide City's Milan Ivanovic started making incursions into the midfield in an attempt to assert some control in the middle of the park. He may be the 'elder statesman' of the national soccer league and his legs may get weary, but he still has style and skills to burn. This resulted in a few more opportunities for Adelaide City and brought a period of sustained pressure for Northern Spirit.

However, Adelaide City were also their own worst enemy at times, with a succession of corners that were either intercepted (both Mendez and Enes managed this), or mis-hit, or dealt with comfortably

by Henderson.

At the other end of the field, Petkovic was also kept busy with attacking forays from Northern Spirit. He made a number of saves off a variety of Spirit players. His great saves off Zane and Mendez, by pushing the ball wide, kept Adelaide City from finishing the game with a greater deficit.

Paul Foster made his debut for Northern Spirit when he was brought on for Slater in the 75th minute after his arm was crunched in a sprawling tackle. Slater, while always

captain, Alex Tobin.

Northern Spirit enjoyed their victory, with Henderson, Bingley, Arnold, Zane and others doing a circuit of North Sydney Oval to thank their loyal crowd, and Henderson obligingly high-fiving everyone in the crowd within arm's length.

In summary, the match was fast, physical and entertaining, with Northern Spirit reaping the benefit of their midfield dominance and sound defence. It was a decisive victory against quality opposition in a critical match.

The result places Adelaide City under further pressure in the countdown to the Top 6 race.

With Perth Glory, South Melbourne, Northern Spirit and Sydney United looking as certain as one can possibly look with seven rounds to go, there are up to five teams fighting for the final two spots (depending on other results on the weekend).

It will send shockwaves around the local football fraternity if Adelaide City are not there come finals time: they have made every finals series in the 1990s to date and, no doubt, will not want to miss this one.

Arnold said after the game that he hoped to pick up at least four more wins out of the next seven rounds.

"We have a bye next week, so that is



Clayton 'Clacka' Zane ... finally is in form, which is great news for Spirit.

hard-working, had a relatively quiet night for him after close attention from Soccerroo

MATCH STATS ...

Crowd: 15,104

Referee: Eddie Lennie

Northern Spirit: Henderson, Crook, Rudan, Casserly, Slater (Foster, 75m), Arnold, Mendez, Zane, Langdon, Enes, Bingley

Adelaide City: Petkovic, Armour, Yates, Ivanovic, Tobin, Talladira, Mori, Veart, Hassell, Terminello, Kim

Votes for Player of the Year:

3: Zane (NS)
2: Petkovic (AC)
1: Arnold (NS)

really four wins out of six games. I think we need at least 45 points to be in the finals, but I'd prefer 47."

He said that Zane would not have been in tonight's match except for the last-minute injuries to Marusic and Bilokapic.

"I had decided to put Slater and Marusic up-front for mobility against Tobin and Ivanovic, but had to change plans when Marusic and Billy withdrew.

"Clayton had a shocker last week against Wollongong, but he bounced back well tonight, like they all did."

Arnold said that having someone with the experience of Ian Crook takes a load off his shoulders on the field.

"He's a talker and we need that. It's such a bonus."

Adelaide City coach, Zoran Matic, was not available for comment.

WHO ARE THE 'BOB STANDERS'?

By Bonnie Mersiades

Much has been written about the Bob Standers since this season began. No, it's not a person called Bob Standers — they are the cultured football heads who inhabit The Bob Stand at Spirit Point at the picturesque North Sydney Oval at every Northern Spirit home game.

While not representative of every Northern Spirit supporter, they nonetheless form the core of the Northern Spirit support base and add atmosphere, noise and colour.

When the club first gained admission to the Ericsson Cup national soccer league, a small band of frustrated football followers from the north shore organised themselves into being the Northern Spirit Supporters' Club.

Some have called them the 'Barmy Army' and referred to them as drunken louts who chant profanities and racist taunts — but that does a great disservice to the ever-increasing band of these highly-vocalised fans who are prepared to wear the equivalent of their heart on their sleeve by donning the Spirit shirt on their backs, a Spirit scarf and waving Spirit and Australian flags. From relatively modest numbers, they now boast around 1,000 regulars in their ranks.

We spoke with two of the 'founding' members of the supporters' group at last Friday's game against Adelaide City.

Chris Dunkerley, 48, was born in Sydney and is a manager with the NSW public service.

Prior to Northern Spirit, Chris followed the Newcastle Breakers — and still does — and has made the long trip from suburban Epping to Newcastle every fortnight for the past five years or more.

"It gets hard (to support both teams) when they play each other. Before that, I was a neutral although I also followed Adelaide City for eleven years from 1977."

He said that Northern Spirit is a multi-ethnic local team that he can relate to, and which has a real feeling for the fans.

"I really enjoy my Friday nights. I like to see Spirit win; I enjoy the singing and chanting, and being with friends made through the Spirit."

"When my kids come with me — which is often — that is the

greatest pleasure to share my love of football with them and hopefully pass it on."

Chris' favourite player is Kresimir Marusic because of his skill and his number 7 shirt!

"I also admire Phil Moss for his dedication and living a dream — as well as Adam Snyder in the youth league. He's got a lot of talent."

Geoff Coy, 44, is a CPA with his own business. He is sixth-generation Australian.

"Before Northern Spirit came along, I tried to follow Olympic, but couldn't convince myself to support them. Prior to that I had not been to an NSL game for years."

"Northern Spirit is everything in football. Like my banner said on opening night — 20 years late but worth the wait."

Like Chris, Geoff said he enjoys the atmosphere and a full house at North Sydney Oval, as well as meeting new friends who have the same interest over a few drinks after the game.

His favourite player is Robbie Slater because of his competitive nature and his motivation. Both Chris and Geoff are now confident of the team making the Top 6.

"After that, it's a bit of a lottery," said Geoff. "I also think too much success in the first year would not be good."

No doubt many in the Bob Stand would not agree!

"The main issue in finals time will be consistency," said Chris.

While they are happy with the club, and what they have done to attract and support fans, both still believe there's room for improvement.

"We need better food and drink outlets; we need more in the membership package; the web site needs improving; and the entertainment needs to be more varied," was Geoff's assessment.

Chris also nominated the match-day program as needing improvement in design and content, and greater discounts on merchandising.

"Generally, as long as they keep going in the same direction, I'll be happy," added Chris.

And so, it seems, say 15,000 plus others!





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STRIKERS MAINTAIN THEIR SLIM FINALS HOPES

BRISBANE STRIKERS 1
Bell 76
WOLLONGONG WOLVES 0
At Suncorp Stadium, Brisbane

By Glenn Davis

Brisbane Strikers continue to walk a tightrope for an Ericsson Cup finals berth after a hard fought 1-0 victory over Wollongong Wolves at Suncorp Stadium on Saturday night.

The match appeared a mirror image of their previous nil-all draw against the Melbourne Knights until young defender Matt Bell broke the deadlock in the 76th minute.

Like the Melbourne encounter, the Strikers dominated for lengthy periods but coach John Kosmina's weekly nightmare of missing crucial chances once again came to the fore.

Bell, 21, a former Young Socceroo making only his 30th national league appearance bobbed up in the box at the right time to drive home a header in the top corner of the net off a Kasey Wehrman free-kick.

Bell, who held his place in the side relegating experienced defender Chris Zoricich to the bench after serving a week's suspension, will long remember his first national league goal which has injected new life into the Strikers' finals claims.

Thankfully Wehrman played a minor part in the



Clint Bolton ... superb stuff from the Queensland custodian.

goal swerving in his free kick from the right after missing a costly penalty in the first half.

Wehrman was judged by Melbourne referee Eugene Brazzale to have been tripped by Wollongong keeper Les Pogliacomini after midfielder Nick Meredith found an opening and sliced the ball through for Wehrman to attempt to round the keeper.

The Strikers started the match in ninth position, five points outside the top six, but now are within sight of reaching their goal.

Apart From Wehrman's missed penalty — his second in three weeks, — the Strikers should have put the visitors away much earlier had they had their shooting boots on.

The Strikers had five first half chances to take an early lead but the visitors, who played with a five man defence early on, frustrated the home side forcing shots to go astray.

Rangy defender Steve Laybutt, arguably the Strikers' most consistent player, typified the Strikers' plight striking a powerful header off a Wehrman corner which rebounded off the bottom upright four minutes from the break.

Wollongong were not without its chances of snatching victory but some brave goalkeeping from Clint Bolton helped keep the scoresheet blank.

Bolton made three brilliant saves in the 56th minute blocking two chances with his feet from Wollongong's best player Scott Chipperfield then saved a powerful

MATCH STATS...

Crowd: 4,320

Referee: Eugene Brazzale (Melb)

Brisbane Strikers: Bolton, Gwynne (Zoricich 74), Bell, Laybutt, S Cranney (Knipe 82), Wehrman, McLaren, Hews, Harris, Meredith (Tollenaere 74), Stefanuto.

Wollongong Wolves: Pogliacomini, Souris, Stanton, Horsley (Langon 68), Surjan, Brooks, Chipperfield, Spencer, Huxley, Masi (Karavatakis 82), Reid (Dimoski 54).

Yellows:

Brisbane Strikers: Bell 26

Wollongong Wolves: Reid 42

Votes for Player of the Year:

3: Laybutt (BS)

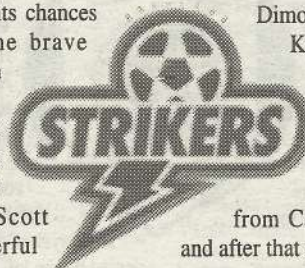
2: Chipperfield (WW)

1: Bolton (BS)

follow up shot from substitute Sasho Dimoski.

Kosmina believes the Strikers need at least another ten points to make the Top Six, from a possible 21 points on offer in their last seven matches.

"We have got to get nine points from Canberra, Newcastle and Gippsland and after that get something away," he said.



GRIFFITHS' FORM A BOOST FOR YOUNG SOCCEROOS

SYDNEY UTD 2
Griffiths 33, 41
MELBOURNE KNIGHTS 1
Susa 7
At Edensor Park, Sydney

By John Economos

Joel Griffiths, Sydney United's sensational 18 year old Young Socceroo striker, scored two fabulous first half goals last Sunday night at the Sydney United Sports Centre to greatly assist his side in defeating the plucky Melbourne Knights 2-1.

Arguably Australia's most rapidly improving striker in the League, and who tomorrow night (Wednesday) flies out for Holland with the Australian Youth squad, the highly talented and mobile Griffiths struck golden goals in the 33rd and 41st minutes to cancel the Knights' unexpected early lead through a seventh minute strike scored by midfielder Zeljko Susa.

Despite Griffiths' scintillating form, with a little luck plus a bit more composure inside the box, the teenager could have nailed another two or three.

Watching Griffiths closely on Sunday was Australia's World Youth coach Les Scheinflug, who told Soccer Weekly: "With more experience Griffiths will quickly gain the composure he needs to grab more goals than he has already."

The lowly placed Knights rattled the lofty United in the seventh minute when attacking left midfielder Ante Deak blasted on target from the left but United's goalkeeper Mike Gibson spilled the greasy ball, allowing Susa to race in and slam into the target from the rebound.

The Knights, inspired by their early lead, threw people forward relentlessly, leaving United's outnumbered midfield in sixes and sevens.

Striker Ivan Kelic almost sealed United's death warrant in the 29th minute when his rocketing and lifting drive from the right skimmed inches over the bar, but 60 seconds later at the other end, Griffiths also went narrowly over the top.

However United's brilliant blond marksman equalised in the 33rd minute when right defender David Barrett crossed in for Mile Sterjovski to blast on target. The Knights' custodian Joe Didulica could only parry the missile, allowing the always alert Griffiths to zip in and tap into an empty target.

Four minutes from 'drinks' Griffiths again climbed onto the scoresheet as he brilliantly finished off a great through-ball by midfielder Steve Berry.

Having survived a torrid and adventurous first half performance by the Knights, with a reorganised midfield that now included the sensational wide man and game-breaker Danny Townsend, Sydney United hit their straps, peppering the gallant Victorians with raid after raid.

Sterjovski set up Walter Ardone for a crack at the target in the 50th minute, but his low 14 metre drive whistled just wide of the base of the left upright, as 10 minutes later Kelic also shaved the post with a powerful header from a Paul Magdic cross from the left.

The goal hungry Griffiths in the 64th minute broke onto an Ardone through ball and flew into the Knights' box, but in his one-on-one with Didulica, the teenager went inches wide of the left post.

In the 67th United's industrious midfielder Berry busted his way into the

box to let fly with a hot drive, but Didulica did extremely well to tip over his 'roof'.

United got stronger with time and in the 75th Griffiths again scooted away, this time to cross from the right to the back stick. But the eager and well positioned Townsend was denied joy as Didulica blocked the youngster's hot header.

Best performers for United other than Man Of The Match Griffiths, were Berry, Barrett, Kupresak and Sterjovski whilst the Knights' best were Deak, Didulica, Kutlesovski and Kelic.



Steve Berry ... the underrated Puma midfielder.

MATCH STATS...

Crowd: 2,118

Referee: G. Connolly.

Sydney United: Gibson, Barrett, Kupresak, Plesa, Santalab, Bennett, Berry, Ardone, Day (Townsend 46), Griffiths, Sterjovski (Caieta 88).

Melbourne Knights: Didulica, Didulica, Banini, Nastevski, Jolic, Kiratzoglou (Magdic 46), Reda (Rajher), Susa, Deak, Kelic, Kutlesovski (Trupkovic 75).

Votes Player of the Year:

3: Griffiths (United)

2: Berry (United)

1: Deak (Melb Knights)

After the match the Knights' former player, now coach Josip Biskic, told Soccer Weekly: "Our midfield played very well and created chances in the first half as well as hitting the post twice, but we conceded two soft goals which upset me."

For their second goal our defence was caught square, but we continued to create more chances in the second half."

Meanwhile United's coach David Mitchell, evaluated: "I was unhappy with our midfield in the first half as our tactics allowed them to have an extra man in the midfield which confused one of my players."

The Knights to their credit made it difficult for us as they came here and opened up with great spirit. These lower teams play with a free spirit which can make them very dangerous.

"I thought Steve Berry did very well in making tackles that people don't really see, but had we scored a couple of more goals in the second half it would have made it much easier for us overall."



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MARAUDER MALONEY DULLS SHARK SPARK

ADELAIDE SHARKS 2
Artone 10, Porter 61
MARCONI FAIRFIELD 3
Maloney 22, 72, Gibson 27
At Hindmarsh Stadium, Adelaide

By Margaret Bowden and Donald Campbell

It was the Corey Artone/Brad Maloney show at Hindmarsh tonight. In one of the classiest, end-to-end games seen in Adelaide this season, Artone set the pitch alight from the kick-off, almost scoring from a free kick in the 8th minute.

Two minutes later he surged forward from nowhere and let fly a 25 metre screamer into the top right corner of the goal — 1-0 Sharks. The move and shot happened so fast Marconi keeper Ante Covic didn't see it coming. Even if he had, there was no chance of a save.

Four minutes later, the small but vocal crowd of home fans were on their feet yelling 'Penalty!' Big Alex Duric, playing the central striker role, escaped the Marconi defence to run onto a brilliant through ball from Derek Poimer in the 18 yard box.

Covic and one of his defenders sandwiched Duric, knocking him to the ground. But the free kick went against him, presumably for diving.

This livened up Marconi, who committed a spate of cynical fouls in the next five minutes, culminating in a caution for Maloney. One minute after his yellow card, he slammed a shot into the top right hand corner of the net — 1-1.

Marcus Phillips took a free kick on the left, squared to Kris Trajanovski, who passed to Maloney on the right for a breathtaking finish. Sharks keeper Nathan Wildy, like Covic earlier, had no chance. What a goal!

What a game! A minute later, Frank Tibaldi, constantly on the overlap down the left flank, crossed

high for an Alex Castro header. Just as the fans started to celebrate, Marconi cleared the ball off the goal line. In the space of two seconds, Paul Souris performed an identical clearance at the other end from a Buddy Farah shot. Another three minutes of full-on attack from both sides ended in Marconi's second goal.

Trajanovski, Maloney, Darren McDonald and Marcus Phillips ceaselessly pressured the Sharks' defence. After three scrambled clearances in the 18 yard box, Chad Gibson ran onto a fourth and bulleted a header into the roof of the net. Again Wildy had no chance — 2-1 Marconi.

The Sharks defence seemed to be missing the influence of Con Kokkinoplitis (injured) and Alex Kuzmanovic (ill), while the interesting duel between brothers Chad and John Gibson never eventuated due to John's groin injury.

Determined to level the score, Derek Poimer created havoc in the Marconi defence, but was denied any real shots by the stolid Mike Smith.

Maloney continued to dominate the midfield, combining with McDonald and Trajanovski to keep Souris, Paul Pezos and Branko Milosevic on their toes. Wildy pulled off the save of the match in the 32nd minute from a cracking McDonald shot from 20 metres, diving to punch the ball clear. Unbelievable brilliance from both players.

Six minutes later, Richie Alagich roared into the box, dodged two defenders then squared for 88.5 Coast FM

Player of the Match Artone to shoot, only to be denied by the left hand corner of the cross bar.

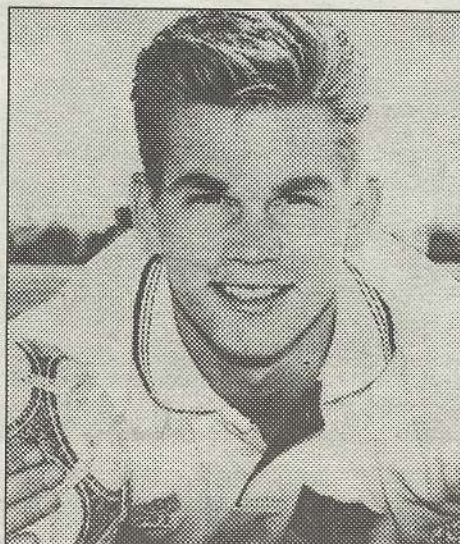
The final ten minutes of the first half was all Sharks, but Pan-Keun Kim and Smith expertly blocked their attacks. Farah was cautioned almost on the whistle for a crippling foul on Duric, who was replaced by Joel Porter at half time.

Four minutes into the second half, Artone lobbed a free kick into the box for Poimer, whose header brought a magnificent save from Covic.

Ten minutes later fed Poimer, whose shot was saved this time by the cross bar. Only seconds later, Poimer dodged into the box, drew Covic out and squared to Porter free on the left who slotted the ball into the net — 2-2.

Artone was on his way again from the restart, but was crudely upended by Farah, who was lucky to stay on the pitch. Marconi then attacked through Maloney and Phillips, who forced a superb diving save from Wildy.

Porter, Tibaldi and Artone combined to threaten the Marconi goal again from the resultant goal kick, but Artone's shot went wide.



Brad Maloney ... second week in a row he has inspired his Stallions.

MATCH STATS...

Crowd: Official 2,158

Referee: Jeremy Blaney

Adelaide Sharks: Wildy, Alagich, Castro, Souris, Artone, Milosevic, Poimer, Duric (Porter 46), Tibaldi (Thorp 80), Pezos, Westervelt.

Marconi: Covic, Gibson, Phillips, Kim, McDonald, Babic (Bruni 86), Maloney, Smith, Farah, Renaud, Trajanovski (Zoric 71).

Yellows

Marconi: Maloney, Farah, Phillips

Votes for Player of the Year:

3: Artone (Sharks)

2: Maloney (Marconi)

1: Tibaldi (Sharks)

Marconi coach Frank Farina performed a master stroke by substituting Trajanovski with Vlado Zoric — once described as 'a beach player' — at a critical stage, breaking the Sharks' concentration. Seconds later Maloney, fed by a defence splitting pass from McDonald, sold the Sharks' defence the perfect dummy to rocket a shot past Wildy — 3-2.

Artone replied immediately, his shot forcing Covic into two grabs at the ball.

The game continued to be an end-to-end thriller until the final whistle, with Zoric making his presence felt. Aaron Westervelt, playing his first full senior game this season in the centre of the midfield performed well, as did the other young Sharks Porter, Pezos and Wildy.

OLYMPIC BROUGHT BACK DOWN TO EARTH

GIPPSLAND FALCONS 1
Macnicol 66
UTS SYDNEY OLYMPIC 0
At Mobil Park, Gippsland

By Damian Tripodi

Although playing with only 10 men for most of the game, the Gippsland Falcons defeated Premiership aspirant Sydney Olympic by one goal to nil in their encounter at Mobil Park on Sunday.

Falcons striker Marko Perinovic was sent-off by referee Barry Pannella in the 41st minute, following two bookable offences.

The loss however will most certainly reduce any hope that Olympic had for the double chance in the play-offs.

The Gippslanders, despite their lowly position on the ladder and the humiliating 5-1 loss at the hands of Marconi last week, bounced back displaying courage, cohesive team work and venom to match and beat their more glamorous opponents.

Although losing injuries early in the game and being at the end of some unfortunate refereeing decisions, right from the beginning Stuart Munro's charges put into effect a disciplined style of play and high work rate which had been clearly missing for several weeks.

Olympic coach Branko Culina, obviously disappointed with his team's loss, stated that he had no excuses "I could make some," stated the coach "but we played rubbish. Full marks to Gippsland."

He went on to say that some of his players didn't deserve their pay packet. "We went from outplaying the top team in the competition last week to losing against one of the worst in the League and they only had 10 men. We treat our players so well and yet they don't realise that they should perform."

The game was played at a fast pace with fairly even possessions and even chances in the first half.

Gradually the Gippslanders worked their way back and began using the ball well with good build ups, playing two touch football and mounting some convincing striking chances of their own.

At the 14th minute, Marko Perinovich, at the end of a Clayton Bell cross, with a header forced Olympic keeper George Bouhoutsos to make a very good save.

Shots at goal by Adrian Cervinski and Pablo Cardozo for Olympic followed with the latter and Tome combining well to give the Gippsland defence some anxious moments.

At the other end Perinovic and Brian Macnicol also combined well with both having shots at goal but without finding the net.

At the 35th minute Will Hastie sent a long diagonal ball to Perinovic. With no Olympic defender in sight, Bouhoutsos courageously ran from his goal line and miraculously managed to get a fist to the ball to deflect it away from danger.

Following the Perinovich sent off and with two of the substitutes on the ground following the stretching off of Adrian Savage and Ben Cassar, the Falcons kept their composure and in fact lifted their already high level of commitment.

The home side blew a chance one minute before the half-time whistle. Macnicol received a ball from Hopkins at the corner of the 18 yard box and sent it across the face of goal to be taken by Michael Katz, the youngster held the ball and drew the keeper before laying it to Andy Vargas, who from point blank and with the keeper out of place sent it too high.

The one man deficit began to have an affect early in the second half as the Falcons had no choice but defend and attempt counter attacking moves.

Twelve minutes into the half in one such moves Macnicol received a well judged cross from Will Hastic in the penalty area, however, as he went to shoot, right



Jeff Hopkins ... no wonder he's smiling! He wears Valsport and he has just beaten Sydney Olympic. Pic by Melbin.

in front of the referee, he was put down by big what clearly appeared to be a push in the back by Scott Baillie. Despite the cries for a penalty, the referee waved the play on signal.

The Falcons goal came in the 66th minute. Hastie from the centre of the ground laid the ball off to Katz, back to Hastie who took on Baillie, crossed to Macnicol at the near post who headed home.

In their attempt to equalise, Olympic mounted a wave of attacks with Mehmed Durakovic playing a pivotal role.

MATCH STATS...

Crowd: 1,200

Referee: Barry Pannella

Gippsland Falcons: Jevdejevic, Anderson, Hopkins, Osman, Savage (Hutchinson 15), Cassar (Vargas 29), Macnicol (Becvinovski 86), Hastie, Perinovic, Bell, Katz.

UTS Sydney Olympic: Bouhoutsos, Tsekenis, Cardozo, Emerton, Duric, Cervinski (Zorbas 60), Baillie, Durakovic, Blagojevic, Jomaa (Augerinos).

Yellows:

Gippsland Falcons: Perinovic 39 & 41
Sydney Olympic: Tsekenis 30, Blagojevic 77

Red:

Gippsland Falcons: Perinovic 41

Votes Player of the Year:

3: Osman (G)

2: Macnicol (G)

1: Durakovic (O)

The Falcons, however managed to hold on and make some counter attacking breaks of their own.

Gippsland coach Stuart Munro was happy with his team's performance and stated that they matched Olympic for the entire 90 minutes. "They (Olympic) had a couple of five minute spells, but we did well. Our players showed that they had commitment and hunger and it proved that you can get good results by doing that," stated the satisfied coach.

National Youth League

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SOUTHERN DIVISION

Round 23

Bulleen Inter	1	Melbourne Knights	5
Albury Wodonga	0	Carlton	2

Gippsland Falcons v Bye

Wednesday March 31

South Melbourne v VIS
(Bob Jane Stadium, 5 pm)

League Ladder

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Carlton	17	11	3	3	47	19	36
South Melbourne	18	11	3	4	32	17	36
VIS	16	8	4	4	32	26	28
Melbourne Knights	18	8	3	7	36	33	27
Gippsland Falcons	17	7	2	8	30	28	23
Bulleen Inter Kings	15	5	2	8	20	29	17
Albury Wodonga	17	0	1	16	16	61	1

ROUND 24

Saturday 13 March

Bulleen v Gippsland Falcons,
(Anderson Park, 4 pm)

Sunday 14 March

Carlton v South Melbourne,
(Olympic Park, 3 pm)
Melbourne Knights v Albury Wodonga,
(Knights Stadium, 5 pm)
VIS v Bye

LEADING SOUTHERN SCORERS

Andrew Mashoian	South Melb	15
Scott McDonald	VIS	7
Tony Ouliaris	Carlton	7
Erhan Bayraktar	South Melb	7

Southern Summary ... Only two games in Round 23 were played in the Southern Division this week. Melbourne Knights beat Bulleen Inter Kings by five goals to one at Anderson Park on Wednesday night.

Hrvoje Matkovic put the Knights in front after eight minutes, then Jonathan Corso equalised ten minutes later, only for Ante Deak to restore the Knights' lead inside a minute.

There it stayed until Steven Tillinger's penalty made it three-one for the Knights in the 59th minute. Serdar Bol was next to score in 71 and Chris Tabak scored the last goal with two minutes to play.

Robert Bresciano of Bulleen got his marching orders in 76 minutes, and three of the Knights' scorers came from Geelong, while Matkovic played with North Geelong in the State League.

Albury Wodonga held Carlton scoreless till the last ten minutes of their game at Myrtleford, but eventually the Blues found a way of stretching the home defence and got telling crosses in from which Deniz Ekici and David Debevc scored late goals. Albury keeper Sam Chambers was in outstanding form once again.

South Melbourne and the VIS will play their Round 23 match on 31 March at Bob Jane Stadium. Gippsland Falcons had the bye.

Northern Summary ... Sydney Olympic had a comfortable three-nil win over Northern Spirit Colts with all the goals coming in the first 26 minutes.

Carlos Gonzalez was first to score in eight minutes, followed by Ali Jomaa in 18 and Adrian Totaro in 26.

Coach Peter Papanikitas gave his younger players a run in the second half, while the Colts lifted their game and prevented any further score.

Northern Spirit needed an own goal by Marconi Fairfield Colts to give it its one-nil win at Cromer Park.

NSWIS beat Sydney United by three goals to one at Edensor Park. Simon Catanzaro opened for the Institute in 20 minutes and Steve Jordan equalised four minutes later.

It stayed at one-all till after an hour had been played, then Liam Austin put the Institute ahead and Simon Catanzaro scored his second to ensure the result.

Anthony Doumanis's penalty was brilliantly saved by United keeper Milko Topic, but Doumanis otherwise had an excellent game as did Naubel Arrarte and Mark Byrnes who is in the Young Socceroo squad.

Wollongong Wolves had a fine three-nil away win over the QAS. Gerald Quennet scored twice for the Wolves, the first coming in 40 minutes and the second in 75, just a minute after Michael Clare had scored the second for the Wolves.

Sydney Olympic Academy and Sydney United Colts drew two-each at Wentworth Park. Chris Seitis scored both goals for the Academy, while Monte Prfengle and Frank Iorfino scored for the Colts.

Marconi Fairfield had an eight-nil romp against Wollongong Wolves Colts. Luke Tomich completed a hat-trick in 27, 48 and 65 minutes, and Mauro van Cuylenberg, Hakan Celik, Devrim Huseyin, Mark Haggard and Michael Galluzzo scored the others in 15, 73, 50, 62 and 54 minutes respectively.

NORTHERN DIVISION

Round 23

Northern Spirit Colts	0	Sydney Olympic	3
Northern Spirit	1	Marconi Fairfield Colts	0
QAS	0	Wollongong Wolves	3
Sydney United	1	NSWIS	3
Wollongong Wolves Colts	0	Marconi Fairfield	8
Sydney Olympic Academy	2	Sydney United Colts	2

Newcastle Breakers v Bye

Monday March 8

ACTAS v AIS
(Bruce Stadium, 4.30pm)

League Ladder

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
AIS	21	15	5	1	73	14	50
Sydney Olympic	21	15	2	4	64	20	47
Newcastle Breakers	20	13	4	3	45	19	43
NSWIS	20	13	3	4	49	19	42
Marconi Fairfield	18	12	5	1	64	12	41
Northern Spirit	21	13	2	6	35	21	41
Wollongong Wolves	20	11	2	7	52	24	35
QAS	20	11	1	8	53	32	34
Sydney United	21	8	4	9	39	35	28
Marconi Fairfield Colts	20	5	4	11	19	34	19
ACTAS	20	4	3	13	29	51	15
Sydney United Colts	19	4	1	14	20	57	13
Northern Spirit Colts	20	2	3	15	17	80	9
Sydney Olympic Academy	21	1	4	16	15	79	7
Wollongong Wolves Colts	20	1	3	16	13	90	6

ROUND 24

Saturday 13 March

Marconi Fairfield v Newcastle Breakers,
(Marconi Stadium, 5 pm)

AIS v Sydney Olympic Academy,
(AIS Soccer Field, 7 pm)

Sydney United Colts v Northern Spirit Colts,
(Edensor Park, 5 pm)

Sunday 14 March

NSWIS v ACTAS,
(Valentine Park, 6 pm)

Marconi Fairfield Colts v QAS,
(Marconi Stadium, 5 pm)

Wollongong Wolves v Sydney United,
(Brandon Park, 4 pm)

Sydney Olympic v Wollongong Wolves Colts,
(Belmore Sports Ground, 4 pm)
Bye v Northern Spirit

LEADING NORTHERN SCORERS

Mark Hagger	Marconi	17
Simon Catanzaro	NSWIS	16
Daniel Kukucka	Sydney United	14
Kevo Gulesserian	AIS	14
Elias Demourtzidis	AIS	12
Russell Miner	QAS	11

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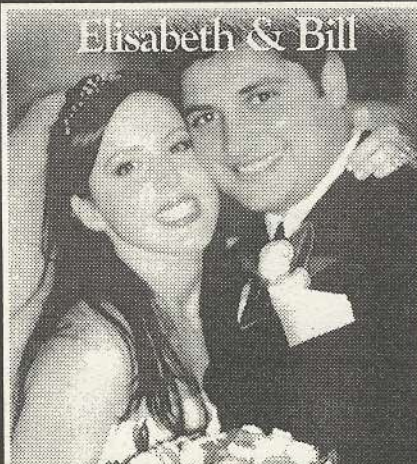
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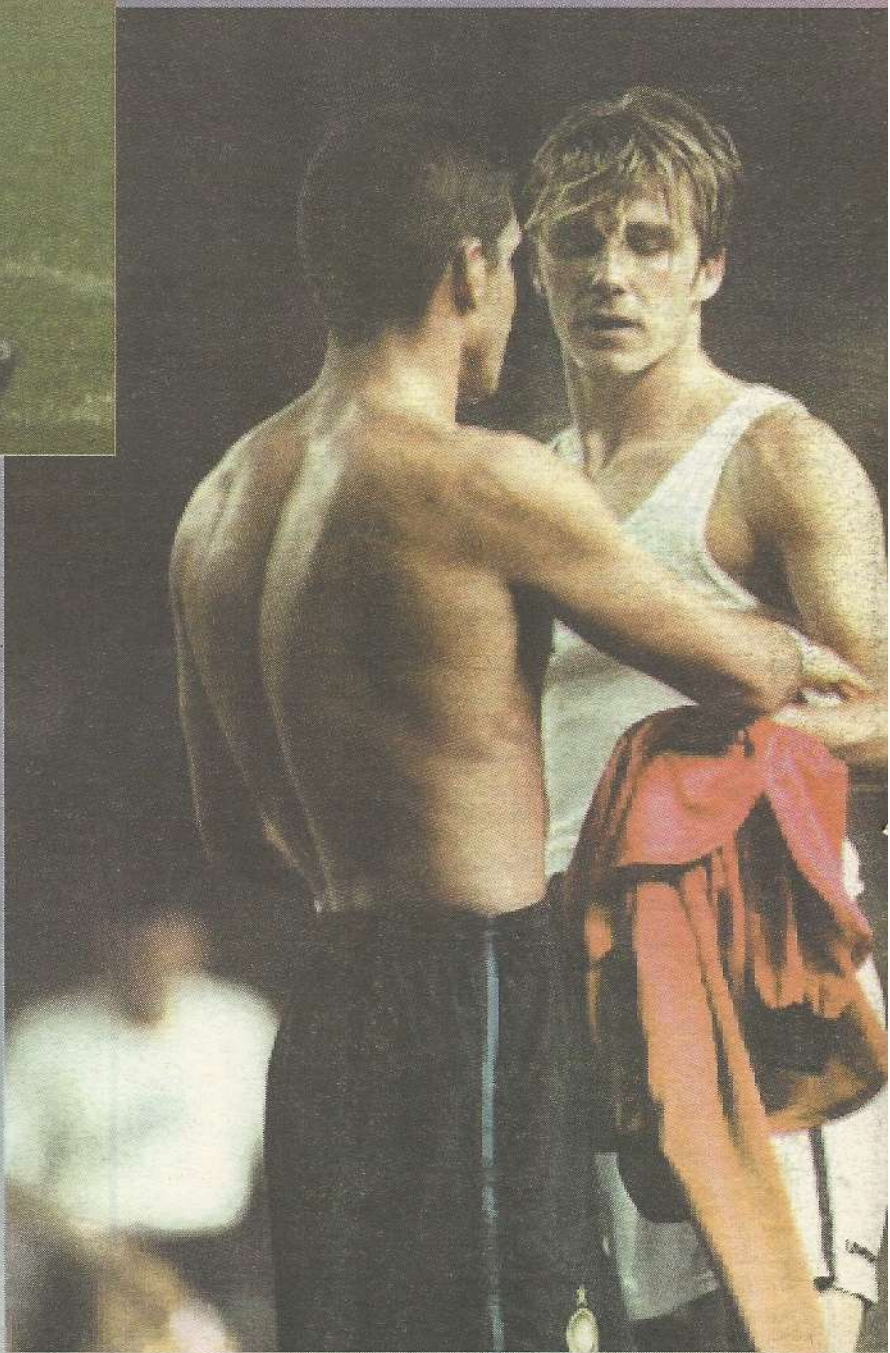
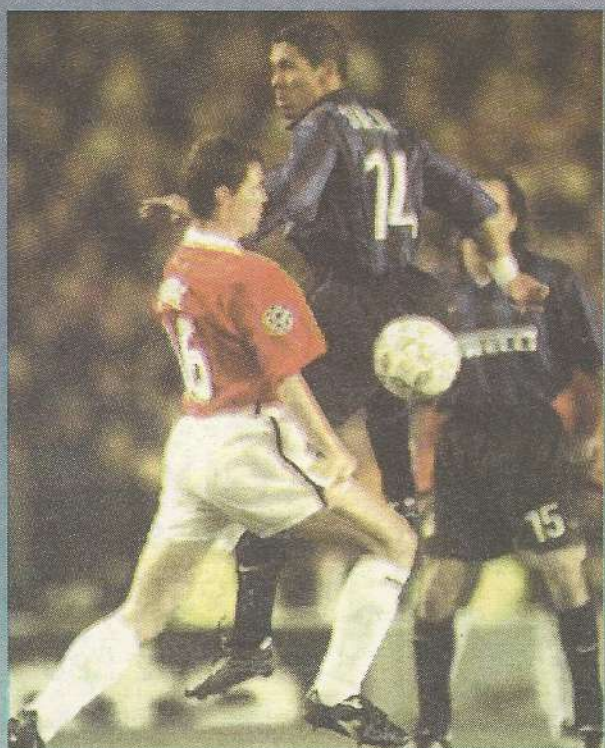
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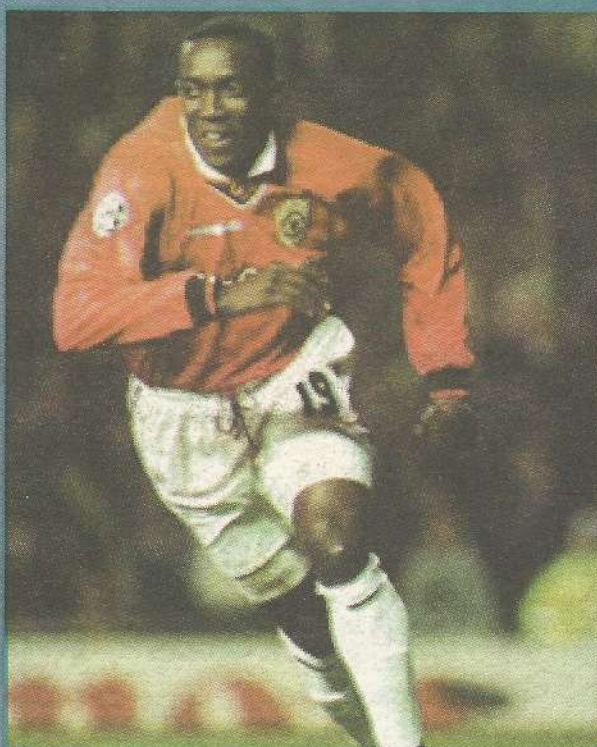
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AUSTRALIAN & BRITISH
Soccer Weekly





CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

NSW SUPER LEAGUE

NSW SOCCER FEDERATION SUPER LEAGUE

Results

Round



Five

FAIRFIELD BULLS M Borg 53	1	PARRAMATTA EAGLES 0	0
BONNYRIGG WE	0	MACARTHUR RAMS R Lloyd 16	1
RYDE CITY C Sharpley 18 J Koch 56	2	SUTHERLAND SHARKS L Stephen 29 39 C Hobbs 87	3
BANKSTOWN C LIONS R Luksic 16 S Van Bentum 63 75 R Issa 64	4	EASTERN SUBURBS N Imaya 88	1
LEICHHARDT TIGERS C Lansdowne 40 T Bazdaric 85 H Kdouh 87	3	CENTRAL COAST 0	0
CANTERBURY M'VILLE A Markopoulos 65	1	BLACKTOWN CITY S Cleary 77 A Holst 84	2

TIGERS MAUL COASTIES

By Ben Cubby

Leichhardt Tigers 3
Central Coast 0

Leachhardt Tigers recorded a solid 3-0 victory over the young Central Coast outfit at Lambert Park on Sunday evening.

Both teams came out full of confidence after good wins last weekend and played some skilful football despite the slippery conditions.

Leichhardt had the better of the opening exchanges, with Sarkis Boudaher and Hassan Kdouh raiding down the left touchline and forcing a series of corners in the early minutes.

Chris Lansdowne created several scoring chances with his acceleration and close ball control, but was thwarted each time by veteran Coast 'keeper Gary Meier.

The Central Coast team were camped in their own half for long periods and had to wait until the 29th minute for a scoring opportunity, when a Peter Preston shot was well saved by Frank Mikuletic.

Kdouh squandered several good chances after being set up by Lansdowne and nippy midfielder David James, a former Sydney United youth team star.

The Tigers were finally rewarded for their relentless pressure when, five minutes before half-time, Lansdowne drilled a powerful shot from the edge of the penalty area into the bottom right hand corner of the Coast goal.

Nathan Byrn almost notched an immediate reply, but curled his shot just wide of Frank Mikuletic's goalpost.

Both teams came out firing after the restart. Byrn and Preston both had shots that failed to hit the target, and Leichhardt's two overlapping fullbacks — Anthony Tesoro and Tom Bazdaric — used the width of the pitch to draw players wide and in accurate crosses.

Former Sydney Olympic star Gary Meier rescued his team on many occasions, most notably in the 73rd minute when Tom

Bazdaric seemed certain to score after a flowing move involving Eric Hristodoulou, Lansdowne and Kdouh.

Tigers finally got their second goal in the 85th minute. Lansdowne evaded a couple of tackles on the left and floated in a perfect cross to the unmarked Bazdaric, who produced a neat finish from close range.

To the delight of the parochial home crowd, Hassan Kdouh was put through by Lansdowne to make it 3-0 in the 88th minute, after a one-on-one with Meier.

Central Coast coach Allan Bourke was obviously disappointed with the final scoreline, but felt that his side had done quite well considering that they were without important players such as Scott Wells and Mark Drysdale.

"Seven or eight of our squad are seventeen or eighteen years old," he said.

"Players like Derryk Kane and Clint Smith did well against far more experienced opponents. It's a learning experience."

Meier was outstanding in goal for Central Coast, Marcus Steele shone at sweeper, and Nathan Byrn worked hard up front.

For Leichhardt, the classy Chris Lansdowne looked sharp and always hungry for the ball. He was well supported by former Wollongong Wolves player Tom Bazdaric. Sweeper Hristodoulou entertained the crowd with some silky skills when pushing forward and big Blago Milicevic was solid at the back.

After the match, Leichhardt captain Hristodoulou said the team played well as a unit and "it could easily have been five or six nil."

Morale is high at the club since the arrival of new coach Arno Bertogna and, according to the captain, "if the team is fit we will be right up there at the end of the season."

Leichhardt: Mikuletic, Tesoro, Milicevic, Pettenson, Hristodoulou, James (Pillemer 61st), Lansdowne, Macolino (Talceviski 73rd), Bazdaric, Boudaher, Kdouh.

Central Coast: Meier, Demery, Steele, Binskin, Preston, Byrn, Norman (Kane 65), Tonkiss (Smith 75th), Maltby, Sontag (McKendrick 80th), McDermott.

Referee: Boyd McGregor.

NSW SOCCER FEDERATION SUPER LEAGUE

ROUND



SIX

Saturday 13 March

Blacktown City Demons v Leichhardt Tigers
Gabbie Stadium, 6:00pm
Central Coast v Ryde City
Pluim Park, 6:00pm
Sutherland Sharks v Bonnyrigg White Eagles
Seymour Shaw, 7:00pm
Macarthur Rams v Bankstown City Lions
Lynwood Park, 7:00pm

Sunday 14 March

Eastern Suburbs v Fairfield Bulls
Wentworth Park, 5:00pm
Canterbury-Marrickville v Parramatta Eagles
Henson Park, 6:00pm

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SUPER LEAGUE

FIRST GRADE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	DIF	PTS
Macarthur Rams	5	4	1	0	12	6	6	13
Leichhardt Tigers	5	3	1	1	12	5	7	10
Fairfield Bulls	5	3	1	1	9	7	2	10
Bankstown City Lions	5	3	0	2	13	10	3	9
Blacktown C Demons	5	3	0	2	8	5	3	9
Bonnyrigg WE	5	2	1	2	12	10	2	7
Parramatta Eagles	5	2	1	2	4	6	-2	7
Central Coast	5	2	1	2	6	10	-4	7
Canterbury M'ville	5	1	2	2	10	8	2	5
Sutherland Sharks	5	1	1	3	6	12	-6	4
Ryde City	5	0	2	3	7	11	-4	2
Eastern Suburbs	5	0	1	4	5	14	-9	1

UNDER 21

	P	W	D	L	F	A	DIF	PTS
Bonnyrigg WE	5	4	0	1	10	3	7	12
Canterbury M'ville	5	3	1	1	10	5	5	10
Macarthur Rams	5	3	0	2	11	8	3	9
Eastern Suburbs	5	3	0	2	6	6	0	9
Parramatta Eagles	5	2	2	1	13	9	4	8
Central Coast	5	2	2	1	10	8	2	8
Blacktown C Demons	5	2	1	2	9	8	1	7
Fairfield Bulls	5	2	0	3	5	10	-5	6
Ryde City	5	1	1	3	8	9	-1	4
Leichhardt Tigers	5	1	1	3	9	14	-5	4
Sutherland Sharks	5	1	1	3	6	11	-5	4
Bankstown City Lions	5	1	1	3	5	11	-6	4

UNDER 18

	P	W	D	L	F	A	DIF	PTS
Macarthur Rams	5	4	0	1	8	3	5	12
Canterbury M'ville	5	3	2	0	14	7	7	11
Parramatta Eagles	5	3	1	1	19	5	14	10
Leichhardt Tigers	5	3	1	1	5	4	1	10
Blacktown C Demons	5	2	2	1	9	7	2	8

Eastern Suburbs	5	2	1	2	9	7	2	7
Ryde City	5	2	1	2	7	7	0	7
Bankstown City Lions	5	2	0	3	11	14	-3	6
Central Coast	5	1	1	3	7	10	-3	4
Bonnyrigg WE	5	1	1	3	5	9	-4	4
Sutherland Sharks	5	1	1	3	4	10	-6	4
Fairfield Bulls	5	0	1	4	3	18	-15	1

SUPER YOUTH LEAGUE

ROUND ONE

	G/13	G/14	G/15	G/16
G'ville Horn v L'hardt Tigers	2-0	1-0	4-1	0-2
P'matta Eagles v East. Subs	5-1	4-1	6-0	6-0
Marconi F'ield v Sydney Utd	2-0	2-3	3-0	2-0
Sutherland S v Macarthur R	1-1	1-0	0-2	1-1
Manly Warr v Sthn Dist	1-3	0-4	0-5	1-2
Blacktown City v N'wcastle B	4-0	1-2	1-0	0-1
Sydney Oly v Central Coast	5-1	8-0	5-2	3-1
W'gong Wolves v Sthn Branch	1-1	3-2	3-2	0-1

COMBINED YOUTH LEAGUE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	DIF	PTS
Parramatta Eagles	4	4	0	0	21	2	19	12
Sydney Olympic	4	4	0	0	21	4	17	12
Southern Districts	4	4	0	0	14	2	12	12
Marconi Fairfield	4	3	0	1	9	3	6	9
G'ville Hornsby Assoc	4	3	0	1	7	3	4	9
Wollongong Wolves	4	2	1	1	7	6	1	7
Blacktown City D	4	2	0	2	6	3	3	6
Newcastle Breakers	4	2	0	2	3	6	-3	6
Macarthur Rams	4	1	2	1	4	3	1	5
Sutherland Sharks	4	1	2	1	3	4	-1	5
Southern Branch	4	1	1	2	6	7	-1	4
Leichhardt Tigers	4	1	0	3	3	7	-4	3
Sydney United	4	1	0	3	3	9	-6	3
Manly Warr Dolphins	4	0	0	4	2	14	-12	0
Central Coast	4	0	0	4	4	21	-17	0
Eastern Suburbs	4	0	0	4	2	21	-19	0

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PREMIER LEAGUE



INTER KINGS OF GRAND FINAL REPLAY

SUNSHINE GEORGIES 1 SPRINGVALE W.E. 1

By Milan Ninovic

Sunshine Georgies and Springvale White Eagles fought out a 1-1 draw on Sunday with both goals coming in the last five minutes of the game.

Vince De La Plaza's 86th minute goal looked to have won it for the Georgies but, just a minute later, the White Eagles equalised through Zlatko Mihajlovic.

Springvale ended up the game with nine players. Eric Styczen was injured when all substitutes had already been used and Whilliam Armour was sent off in stoppage time for a foul on Robert Krajcic. Sunshine threatened to score first, when Cesar Hermosilla tested White Eagles keeper Robert Brian in the 33rd minute with a header that Brian did well to tip away for a corner.

Two second half substitutes for the White Eagles turned the game a little in their favour.

Zoran Cvetkovski came on for Igor Mandic and Ninoslav Bezbradice replaced Jim Gacovski and Springvale looked a different team.

Styczen was a little unlucky not to score when he had two attempts at a goal.

Firstly, he had a shot cleared off the line and then, from the rebound, his shot forced Georgies keeper Steve Wardle into a magnificent save.

Former Springvale player, De La Plaza, got the Georgies a goal with four minutes to go when he beat Brian with a shot from inside the 18 yard area.

But Mihajlovic levelled just a minute later when he headed in Cvetkovski's cross.

Referee: Jim Ouliaris

Georgies: Wardle, Krajcic, Kanesoulis, Debono, Tambouras, Rozanitis, Bot, Kindtner, Opazo, Recchia, Hermosilla (De La Plaza).

White Eagles: Brian, Calomino, Armour (sent off), Cohadzic, Culibrk, Z Mihajlovic, Styczen, Mandic (Cvetkovski), Gacovski (Bezbradica), Milnar (M Mihajlovic).

Votes:

3: Tambouras (SG)
2: Mihajlovic (ME)
1: Nikolic (SWE)

ALTONA MAGIC 3 WESTVALE 2

By John Rigas

Altona Magic broke through for their first victory of the season on Sunday, defeating Westvale 3-2 at Paisley Park.

The Magic, who picked up their first point last Monday at Bulleen, went ahead in the opening seconds of the match.

Player-coach, Zoran Trajceski, floated in a free kick to John Sapazovski who who latched on to it and put the ball past Westvale keeper David Acteson.

Their dream start continued when they doubled their lead in the 4th minute.

A Westvale indiscretion gave Altona an in-direct free kick inside the area. Henry Velakovski layed it off Trajceski to put away Altona's second.

But Westvale hit back and reduced the deficit with a goal a couple of minutes before half time.

Gerry McAleer's shot from the edge of the box beat Magic keeper Darren McGrath with the aid of the post.

Nine minutes into the second half, Westvale equalised when player-coach Phil Stubbins converted a penalty.

But the Magic went back into the lead in the 71st minute, Sapazovski grabbing his second after snapping up a rebound.

Magic: McGrath, Bizimovski, Tasevski, Ristevski, Micevski (Todorovski), T Markovski, Vasilevski, Ashton, Trajceski (Trifonov), Sapazovski, Veikovski.

Westvale: Acteson, Marinkovic, Stubbins, Culina (Medjedovic), Armstrong, Bergam (Hasler), McAleer, Brown, Geri, H Timotheou, T Timotheou.

Referee: Dominic Barba

Votes:
3: Apazovski (AM)
2: Bizimovski (AM)
1: Stubbins (W)

ST ALBANS SAINTS 1 BULLEEN INTER KINGS 2

By Frank Jelincic

In the replay of last season's Grand Final, Bulleen once again showed championship qualities with a 3-1 victory at Churchill Reserve.

St Albans youngster Ivan Razov scored 14 minutes into the game, collecting Harry Karl's lay off at the edge of the penalty area to hit a low, powerful shot into the bottom left hand corner.

Bulleen began to slowly assert themselves with numerous chances going astray. It was in the 32nd minute when Danny Gnjdjic tapped home from a corner.

It was soon after the interval that Bulleen took the lead with the St Albans defence unable to clear the ball. Continuous pressure forced Mick Colina into pulling Gnjdjic's shirt inside the penalty area. Gnjdjic himself converted the spot kick.

The game then became very heated within a ten minute time frame. Both sides showed some fierce tackling but referee Rick Arturi was in complete control of the game.

The Kings made it 3-1 when a long cross from Michael Mazzini found Paul Della Rocca who rose above the Saints defence to head into the net.

Gnjdjic nearly made it a hat-trick when he chipped debut keeper Steve Pavlovic only to see the ball hit the crossbar.

Slavko Rados came close in the dying minutes with a thunderous free kick from 25 metres that Sean Keogh did well to save.

Saints: Pavlovic, Raspudic, Colina, Karl, Dragicevic, I Razov, Rados, Clarica (Bacak), Vojtek (Vidakovic), Movric (M Cuze), K Razov Kings: Keogh, Valentice, Stojceviski, Rusmir (Everetts), Della Rocca, Mazzini, Babic, Waddell, Gnjdjic (Guglielmi), Sherifovski, Grbac.

Referee: Rick Arturi

Votes: 3-Gnjdjic (BK), 2-Grbac (BK), 1-I Razov (StA)

FAWKNER BLUES 0 ALTONA EAST 0

By George Koukeris

Fawkner Blues and Altona East played out a disappointing scoreless draw at Smith Reserve on Sunday.

The visitors, who had lost their three previous matches, were the better side for the duration but finding an avenue to goal proved to be difficult.

Fawkner on the other hand were dreadful and will see this as a missed opportunity to gain a vital three points.

George Angelos, Billy Petrovski and Michael Catalano were all good contributors for the Phoenix, as was skipper Steven Bartol who continues his fine start to the season.

Petrovski came the closest to finding the net when, in the 52nd minute, his volley clipped the crossbar.

Catalano was the next to have a go, in the 72nd minute.

His low shot managed to beat Fawkner keeper, Maurice Gonzalez, but Blues stalwart Tony Schipano was there to clear the ball to safety.

The Blues' best chance came in the 76th minute from a Marco Di Sauro cross which fell in between Martin Collins and Chris Sterjovski who couldn't get a touch on the ball and guide it toward the goal.

Blues: Gonzalez, Tramontana, Vazzocchi, P Ferrante, Schipano, V Ferrante (Murphy), Simsek (Alexopoulos), De Santis, Emmanuele (Sterjovski), Collins, Di Sauro.

Phoenix: Chalamandaras, R Antoniadis, Kapulica, De Amicis, Kappadakis, Bartol, Groidis (Verikakis), Papadopoulos, Catalano, Petrovski (Mallinaris).

Referee: Alan Contini

Votes:

3: Catalano (AE)
2: Bartol (AE)
1: Petrovski (AE)

SOUTH DANDENONG 1 BENTLEIGH GREENS 1

By Kevin Christopher

South Dandenong proved once again they will be a very difficult team to beat this season when they held high-flying Bentleigh to a 1-1 draw at George Andrews Reserve on Saturday.

The visitors had the better of the match and their front pairing of David Grella and Juan Nilo was a constant headache for the home defence in the opening 30 minutes and coach Fadil Muriqi was forced to replace Carlo Mason with Agron Tarevski just before half time in an effort to plug holes created by the rampaging Greens.

South's keeper Chris Roche did well to keep his team on level terms with good saves from Harry Micheil and Cameron Pino, although the latter was desperately unlucky in the 18th minute when his header from a Grella cross crashed against the bar.

The second half was barely five minutes old when Craig Moodie volleyed a first time pass which split the Greens defence, allowing Carlo Villani to turn and shoot first time past Glenn Clarke to register his first goal of the season.

Bentleigh almost equalised seven minutes later when Pino played in Micheil who round Roche and shot towards goal only to see Tarveski produce a spectacular headed goal-line clearance.

Their equaliser came with 20 minutes remaining when an excellent cross from substitute George Kalimeris found Nilo and his looping header was too good for Roche.

Kalimeris was by now having a major impact on events and he thought he had earned his team a late penalty when he went down under a challenge from Tarevski, but referee Robert Ince waved play on much to the relief of the home supporters.

Bentleigh will be disappointed not to have taken all three points from a match in which they had the lion's share of chances, but that would be unfair on the hosts who displayed enough fight to suggest they may not be the relegation candidates some pundits insisted they would be.

South: Roche, Mason (Tarevski), Lumanovski, Runje, Kirichian (Katouik), Moodie (Mucaj), Memeti, Pelja, Van Egmond, Villani, Mezensof.

Greens: Clarke, Karapatsos (Kotsovolos), Micheil, McDonagh, Constantinou, Drakos, Kourkoutzelos, Pino (Lenetis), Papettas (Kalimeris), Nilo, Grella.

Referee:

Votes:

MELBOURNE RAIDERS 0 PORT MELB SHARKS 2

By Dwyght Tuffnell

Port Melbourne Sharks' 2-0 win over Melbourne Raiders on Saturday night, in the first game at the new Epping Soccer Stadium, ensures they stay unbeaten after the opening six rounds.

The result may not have been right for the Raiders, but their new ground is clearly a winner, as the 3,500 people who packed in to see the game.

What the fans were given was an entertaining match, but somewhat spoiled by two send-offs.

The Raiders had most of the early running, Damir Grganovic and three attempts by Pino Corallo, including a header which hit the bar, all suggested the Raiders would be the first to score on their new ground.

On the half-hour mark though, they received a blow with the dismissal of midfielder George Slifkas.

Slifkas, who hadn't been booked, was issued with a red card by referee Robert Caminiti after a tackle on Port's John Pappas.

Five minutes later the Sharks took the lead with a goal out of absolutely nothing.

Evis Heath had space in the middle of the park and when about 30 metres out, he decided to have a shot, since no one had closed him down.

Heath's shot dipped over Raiders' keeper Robert Manzella and off the underside of the bar.

After a frenetic first half, the tempo slackened in the second period with the Sharks just happy to soak up pressure the ten-man Raiders were applying.

The Sharks too, were reduced to ten men. Defender John-Paul Knezevic got his marching orders when he was booked for a second time after an incident involving John Gasparini.

Gasparini had to be stretchered off and taken to hospital later with concussion.

The Sharks sealed the points four minutes into stoppage time when substitute Chris Palatsides crossed for Peter Kakos to squeeze the ball through the legs of Manzella and into the net. (Next week, ABSW will have a special feature story on the Epping Soccer Stadium.)

Raiders: Manzella, Boschini, Nedanovski (Elkersh), Anastasiou, Iacovitti, Grganovic (De Propertis), Jolevski, Slifkas (sent off), Cuculeski, Gasparini (Soufi-Sabbagh), Corallo.

Sharks: Cooper, Knezevic (sent off), Pappas, Latinopoulos, Vargas, Heath, Kakos, Tsaltas, Tzirtzis, Caimakamis (Palatsides), Fak.

Referee: Robert Caminiti

Votes: 3- Heath (PM), 2- Boschini (MR), 1- Tzirtzis

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ROUND 5 DETAILS

Bulleen Inter Kings 0 - Altona Magic 0

Votes: 3- Everetts (BK), 2- Vasilevski (AM), 1- Della Rocca (BK)

Westvale 1 (Goutzioulis) - Sunshine Georgies 1 (Opazo)

Votes: 3- Opazo (SQ), 2- Kanesoulis (SQ), 1- Pender (W)

ROUND 6

South Dandenong 1 (Villani) - Bentleigh Greens 1 (Nilo)

Melbourne Raiders 0 - Port Melbourne Sharks 2 (Heath, Kakos)

Sunshine Georgies 1 (De La Plaza) - Springvale White Eagles 1 (Z. Mihajlovic)

Altona Magic (Sapazovski 2, Trajceski) - Westvale (McAleer, Stubbins)

St Albans Saints 1 (I. Razov) - Bulleen Inter Kings 3 Gnjdjic 2, Della Rocca)

Fawkner Blues 0 - Altona East 0

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Port Melbourne Sharks	6	5	1	0	18	3	16
Green Gully Cavaliers	5	4	1	0	14	9	13
Bulleen Inter Kings	6	3	3	0	11	5	12
Bentleigh Greens	6	3	2	1	14	5	11
Preston Lions	5	3	0	2	10	5	9
Melbourne Raiders	6	2	2	2	9	8	8
St Albans Saints	6	2	1	3	7	12	7
Altona East	6	2	1	3	6	12	7
South Dandenong	6	1	3	2	6	7	6
Fawkner Blues	6	1	2	3	8	9	5
Springvale White Eagles	6	1	2	3	6	8	5
Sunshine Georgies	6	1	2	3	5	18	5
Altona Magic	6	1	1	4	4	17	4
Westvale	6	0	3	3	8	16	3

ROUND 7 FIXTURES

Saturday March 13

Port Melbourne Sharks v Green Gully Cavaliers - kick off 5pm at Anderson Reserve

Sunday March 14

Altona East v Bentleigh Greens - kick off 5pm at Paisley Park

Preston Lions v Fawkner Blues - kick off 5pm at Goodyear Stadium

Springvale White Eagles v Altona Magic - kick off 5pm at Serbian Sports Centre

Sunshine Georgies v South Dandenong - kick off 5pm at Chaplin Reserve

Monday March 15

Bulleen Inter Kings v Melbourne Raiders - kick off 8.15pm at Veneto Club

Westvale v St Albans Saints - kick off 8.15pm at Green Gully Reserve



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Real Mac Deal ... Liverpool's Steve McManaman is presented to the Spanish media as Real Madrid's new season signing. Euro pages are on 26 & 27.



Gooooooooooooooooo! Argentina's U/17 player Medina celebrates after scoring against Peru. The Americas page, with news of Argentina's club strike, is on page 21.



Arsenal's Ljungberg and Derby's Stefan Schnoor in the Cup game at Highbury. For all your UK needs go to pages 27-31.



South Africa's Lovers Mohlala against Gabon. The Bafanas are currently playing in African Nations Cup qualifiers. African Soccer is on page 22.

Compiled by

AMERICAS

Soccer Weekly

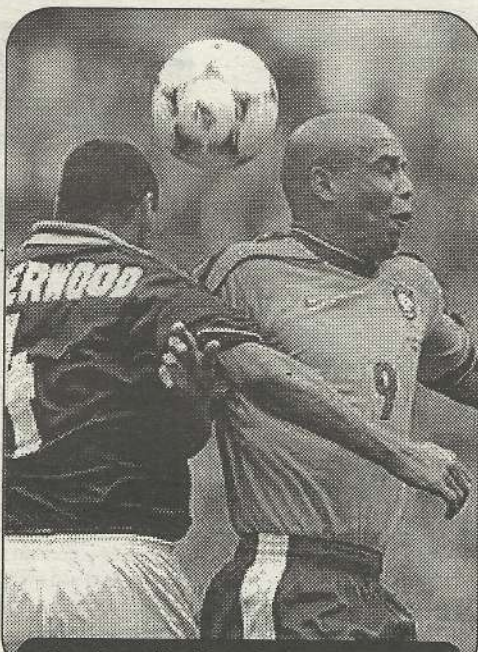
Ronaldo has turned down an invitation to play in Johan Cruyff's testimonial at Barcelona, Spanish newspapers reported.

Cruyff, who guided Barcelona to its sole European Cup success in 1992, will return to the Nou Camp on March 10 to coach a FIFA all-star squad against the current Barca side.

Ronaldo, who played for Barcelona under Bobby Robson in the 1996-97 season before moving to Inter Milan, was invited by Cruyff to join his 24-strong squad for the match.

But he has had to decline because of injury worries.

"I won't go to Barcelona for the Cruyff match," Ronaldo told Spanish sports daily Marca. "I'm grateful for the invitation but I'm still not fully fit from my injury and I need to



Ronaldo ... the injury just won't go away.

Next time you're on the terraces and you slag off an Awaritefe, Slater or Trimboli, spare a thought for Santos fans.

Santos was in trouble again after striker Viola lost his temper with a fan who heckled him during a training session, chased the supporter out of the ground and scuffled with him in the street.

Television pictures showed the former Brazil international's teammates attempting to stop him from punching the fan.

The duel began at the training ground after Viola, top scorer in last year's Brazilian championship with 21 goals, went over to speak to the fan during a break in training.

"I thought he wanted an autograph but then he started calling me things I'd never heard in my life," he said. "I demand respect."

Viola played for Brazil in the 1994 World Cup but has been out of the national team since an unhappy spell in Spain with Valencia where

I DEMAND RESPECT! FAN GETS THE STAR TREATMENT

he failed to adapt and frequently complained he missed his diet of Brazilian black beans!

Trinidad and Tobago comfortably defeated St Vincent and the Grenadines (SVG) 4-0 in an Olympic qualifying match at the Arima Stadium.

A double strike by Hector Sam and goals by Adrian Narine and Joseph Peters ensured that TT completed their clean sweep of the two-leg qualifier.

They now meet the winners of the Barbados/St Lucia leg of the competition in November.

The home team opened the scoring in the 30th minute when Narine slotted home to give his team the lead. Eight minutes after the interval, Sam opened his account with a diving header that beat SVG goalkeeper, Osmond Dennis.

TT increased their lead when Peters collected a left-sided cross at the post to notch up the third goal of the evening. Sam finished off the clinical destruction of the SVG team when he latched on to a cross from Narine which he easily put past Dennis. Although TT won, the wasted opportunities and poor finishing caused concern for TT coach, Bertille St Clair and manager, Richard Brathwaite.

In the night's other match, Ricky Charles scored the winner as Grenada beat top TT team, Joe Public, in a friendly match.

Meanwhile the Jamaican national team, otherwise known as the Reggae Boyz, are currently playing in a four team tournament in Guatemala.

Hooligans brandishing clubs and knives injured at least four people at an exhibition match, marking a resurgence of the violence that resulted in the suspension of league play. What was billed as a friendly match between Boca Juniors and second-division Chacarita had to be abandoned when men with clubs and knives attacked rivals at the Boca stadium.

Police reported arrests, but did not immediately say how many.

Soccer-related violence by hooligans known as "barra bravas" -- and accusations that the clubs are unable assure the safety of the fans -- are at the crux of a court battle in Argentina that prevented the regular season from starting as scheduled on Feb. 12. (see story below).

As such, friendly matches are among the few draws for fans in Argentina, who have gone for weeks without their regular football.

When Wednesday morning's violence erupted, television cameras swiveled from the playing field to the stands where men with stout sticks beat and kicked victims to the ground, leaving them bleeding.

The footage showed one man on the ground as he was apparently being stabbed. Other fans in the stands visibly flinched and withdrew from the attackers as they prowled the bleachers, grabbing rivals and striking them. Some victims were hospitalized.

Boca Juniors was leading 3-0 before play was suspended in the 35th

minute -- just after the violence began. The friendly matches are intended to keep players in shape during a strike by first-division players. On Feb. 9, three days before the start of the South American summer season here, first-division soccer players refused to take the field in league play. Angered by a judge's decision to halt play in the league's lower division -- because of his concerns about violence -- the players chose to sit out in a sign of solidarity with their out-of-work colleagues. The order to ban play has put Judge Victor Perrota on the defensive for a ruling he claims is intended to make games safer for fans -- and players.

"We've got to stop the savagery in the stadiums," Perrota said of his decision.

Last year, Perrota drew the ire of fans and players when he suspended first-division play after a weekend of gunshots, brawls, and robberies in and around stadiums.

Meanwhile, the violence led to name-calling and angry remarks by rival clubs as to who started it all.

Chacarita official Armando Capriotti called the episode "a savage act of aggression on the part of Boca's fans."

Boca Juniors did not immediately comment on the violence in its stadium. Meanwhile, it was unclear what started the brawling.

WHEN THE BALL MOVES, SO DO WE, SAY GRATEFUL ARGENTINES

Argentina, some would say, is back to normal. The football strike, which even had the President cranky, looks finally to have been resolved, despite violence flaring in a friendly (see above story).

A civil Appeals Court ruled 3-0 for the "immediate return" of play, ending a suspension and allowing play in leagues below the first division to resume.

And the first division, whose players went on strike in sympathy with their lower-level colleagues, also was expected to resume, since the union had said it would end its action once the suspension was lifted.

The Appeals Court decision announced by Judge Adolfo Campos Fillol came on a day of renewed soccer violence.

Club-wielding "barra bravas" -- or hooligans -- attacked rival fans Wednesday as Boca Juniors played second-division Chacarita, leaving four people injured during a "friendly match" at Boca stadium. Police reported 10 arrests.

Campos Fillol said Wednesday's violent episode had nothing to do with the decision, telling reporters: "This ruling cannot be tied to the incidents today."

The first-division players have been on strike since Feb. 9, three days before the scheduled start of the Argentina Torneo Clausura, or summer season.

They were angered by a judge's decision to halt play below the first division pending an investigation of soccer violence in and around the stadiums.

The stoppage had put the investigating judge, Victor Perrota, on the defensive for a ruling he claims is intended to make soccer games safer for fans -- and players.

No matter the conditions, Argentines crave their soccer. And clubs are anxious for the money the games generate.

"We were waiting very anxiously for the return of soccer. The situation was becoming untenable because, without games, there is no money to pay the players," Velez club president Raul Gamez said.

River Plate president David Pintado said his club, one of Argentina's most popular, was losing about \$250,000 a week because of the strike.

Even President Carlos Menem complained about being "bored" on Sundays, the traditional day for first-division play.

Menem even invited players to his leafy presidential compound last month to remind them that thousands of people -- not just the players -- rely on the game.

But violence -- and accusations that clubs are not doing enough to ensure the safety of fans and players -- have been at the crux of a protracted legal battle.

Wednesday's violence only brought that issue back into focus.

Antonio Meirama, a Buenos Aires bank employee, lauded Wednesday's court decision.

"Justice was done today. If soccer were to be halted because of the violence, then we would have to bring the country to a halt because violence happens every day in the streets," he said.

Marcela Nogueira, a 23-year-old teacher and fan of River Plate, couldn't contain her excitement.

"Soccer belongs to the people and they just can't take it away," she said. "When the ball moves, so do we. Without football ... all of us were very sad."



Argentina fans ... there has been a breakthrough in the football dispute, but for how long?

Compiled by

AFRICA

Soccer Weekly

Not known for producing Soccer players, things are changing for Bloemfontein, the province that is home to Premier League sides Bloemfontein Celtic and QwaQwa Stars.

At the beginning of this season, Celtic boasted two players with a cap each, Simon Gopane, in goal when Bafana hammered Namibia 4-1 in Burkina Faso a year ago and Benjamin Reed, given a run as a substitute against Cameroon at the Goodwood Showgrounds in July 1992.

Steve Komphela, SA's first captain after re-admittance to world body Fifa in '92, won 10 of his 24 caps while with Stars.

Free State footballers have found it difficult to gain recognition and a move to one of Gauteng's big clubs has usually opened the door to bigger things. Soon after defender Willem Jackson transferred from Celtic to Orlando Pirates in 1997 he won his first cap against France.

But the trend looks set to change following selection of two Celtic youngsters for the Bafana side that played Botswana recently.

Fabian McCarthy and Thiyekile Hendrick "Ace" Gulwa were given a run in Gaborone and both are part of coach Trott Moloto's long-term plans.

Gulwa, 20, who still needs to beef up to compete at international level, described his 15 minutes in a Bafana jersey as "a dream come true".

"People kept telling me I was wasting my time in Bloemfontein.

"I should go to Johannesburg if I wanted to make the national squad," said Gulwa.

"I like Celtic and don't want to leave, I'm a first team regular and now I have proved you don't have to leave Bloemfontein to be recognised."

Celtic coach Styles Phumo, probably the best-qualified trainer in the league, is certain Gulwa will soon be a regular in

the national squad.

"Despite his small stature, Ace is a rare commodity. He's able to move at speed with the ball glued to his feet, he also gets into scoring positions," said Phumo, who is a CAF coaching instructor and has undergone two intense courses in

BLOEMFONTEIN CHANGES ITS SPORTING PERCEPTION

Germany.

Gulwa has eight goals to his name so far and is the club's top scorer from mid-field.

A province in South Africa is catching up with the rest in Soccer player production.

"It's a failing in South African soccer, scoring is left mainly to the strikers, midfielders are not encouraged to get into the box," said Phumo.

"The boy is coachable, not like other youngsters who get cocky as they move up," said the coach.

Last season Phumo introduced Gulwa into the side gradually, bringing him on late in matches, then at half-time.

"Now he is one of the first names on my teamsheet, and knows that if he's on the bench it is part of my tactics."

Gulwa was reasonably well known in his home town of Botshabelo, 40 km outside Bloemfontein, for his exploits with Celtic, but after playing for Bafana has become a local hero.

"Youngsters stop me in the street and ask for autographs. I've signed on everything, pieces of paper, tee-shirts and even their arms," said the footballer, who matriculated from Lefikeng High School in Botshabelo in 1997.

Earlier that year Gulwa went to Germany with Dillon Sheppard (likely to be in Seven Stars' lineup against Celtic on Saturday) for a trial with Borussia Dortmund. Two weeks later Gulwa returned to complete his schooling and sign for Celtic.

"He has a great shot in either foot and is nippy, he's rarely caught in possession, a failing of many players in the PSL," said Sheppard.

Gulwa returned from Tunisia with the SA under-23s this week and hopes to be retained for next month's match against Egypt, SA's last friendly before the Olympic qualifiers start.

"I have so many ambitions — to be a Bafana regular, play at Sydney 2000 and sign for a club overseas.

"I know I'm small and must put on weight. I'm going to gym and working with a physical trainer," said Gulwa, a Manchester United supporter.

When he's not staying in a Celtic club flat in Bloemfontein, Gulwa spends his spare time with his mother, brother and little sister in Botshabelo.

"My mother comes to all our home games and whenever we are on TV she tapes the matches. It helps me to work on my game," he said.

REF CRISIS IN SOUTH AFRICA

On top of the Olympics bribery scandal comes the South African referees, who are under scrutiny for a number of issues dealing with probity.

The referee situation, especially in the Premier League and the First Division, has long been simmering.

Clubs have accused referees of being incompetent, biased and even crooked.

This week it took a new turn when one of the country's leading referees resigned.

Cape Town ref Adiel Carelse says he's had enough.

"I don't need that kind of treatment in my life," he said to local media.

Carelse, who handled the Super Bowl final last year, is considered one of South Africa's top referees.

His decision came in a week when the PSL sacked one of its leading referees following allegations of match-fixing.

Petros Mathabela, who is one of only five South Africans on the Fifa referees panel, was barred from handling any matches involving PSL teams.

The axing of Mathabela follows an inquiry into allegations of match-fixing by the Motimele Commission.

The PSL also called for the dismissal of the South African Football Association's referees committee.

The committee is headed by SAFA Western Province president Russell Paul.

PSL chief executive Joe Nhlela said this week that referees needed to be appointed by an independent body.

Paul, however, pointed out that although the South African Football Association appointed the referees for all PSL matches, the PSL had a big say in the appointments.

Paul also dismissed the PSL's call for his resignation and the dismissal of the referees' committee.

"It's nothing new for the PSL to call for the resignation of the referees' committee," Paul said. "But I'm not prepared to deal with it in the media and create a war of words in the press."

"I'm not exactly sure of what Nhlela said at the press conference, but I'm sure if we called for their resignation they wouldn't budge."

"The call is unsubstantiated and unqualified."

This week, however, Carelse became the first referee to put the case for the officials, telling of abuse from fans, players, officials and coaches.

"I enjoyed being a match official until this bad sportsmanship crept in," he said.

He singled out the Sundowns club, accusing coach Ted Dumitru of stirring up the fans against the referee.

Carelse was recently criticised by Dumitru and Sundowns PRO Alex Shakoane after refereeing a match between the Mamelodi club and Wits University. Shakoane called Carelse's refereeing "sub standard" in an interview.

Paul played down the situation, saying there were no serious cases involving referees facing his committee.

"Most of it was run-of-the-mill situations when we called referees in to help them improve their performances, or when referees arrived late for a game we would call them in for them to explain their reasons," he said.

"We also took action against World Cup official Achmat Salie, who booked a player twice and unintentionally did not send him off."

National referees co-ordinator Philemon Nkosi said his committee would probably ask Carelse to withdraw his resignation.

"I would love for him to reconsider he is rated among our top referees," said Nkosi.

If Carelse sticks to his guns, he will throw in his lot with local soccer and help develop amateur referees, where he started his career as a member of the Blue Bells club in the Wynberg-based Cape District Football Association.

Carelse, 42, began refereeing at professional level in 1986 in the Second Division OK League.

He became a Premier Soccer League referee

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CAMEROON AND FOE IN DISPUTE OVER COMPO CLAIM

Cameroon midfielder Marc-Vivien Foe has said he would not play for the national team again until he received compensation for the smashed knee that cost him a place in the World Cup finals.

"I love Cameroon. I've had problems because I was serving my country, but in return I have received no sign of gratitude. I've been abandoned," the West Ham United player said.

Foe suffered a double fracture of the knee during World Cup training in France and was out of action for seven months.

He joined West Ham from Lens in a four million pounds (\$6.47 million) transfer in January. The French club paid his medical bills during the time he was unable to play.

Cameroon coach Pierre Lechantre would be delighted to have Foe back. He said he understood the player's bitterness but wants him back for the African Nations' Cup return against Mozambique on April 11.

Cameroon beat Mozambique in the opening encounter last Sunday week but Lechantre was unhappy with his midfield.

"The midfield didn't function all that well. Marc-Vivien Foe was missed. I hope a solution will be found rapidly so that he can get back on to the pitch. He's a very talented player," Lechantre said.



Cameroon at France 98.

Leadng goalscorers at the halfway mark of the Qualifying tournament for next year's African Nations Cup finals:

4: Akwa (Angola)

3: Theodore Nzue Nguema (Gabon), Samuel

Okoth, Maurice Sunguti (both Kenya), Ruphin Menakely (Madagascar), Abdeljilil Hadda (Morocco), Adel Sellimi (Tunisia), Majidi Musisi (Uganda)

Compiled

by

ASIA

Soccer Weekly

The J-League kicked off its seventh season on Saturday, having dumped expensive foreigners like Brazilian captain Dunga to find cheaper imports nearer to home.

Recession has forced clubs to turn to cheaper foreigners like Yoo Sang-Chul for soccer inspiration. With Yoo one of seven South Korean internationals now playing in Japan, K-League might be a better name for the championship.

The financial crisis has seen sponsors disappear and clubs fold or be merged.

Yoo is the only foreigner left at 1995 champions Yokohama Marinos after Spaniards Julio Salinas and Jon Andoni Goikoetxea, and Bolivian Julio Cesar Baldivieso all left.

The Marinos merged with this year's Cup winners Yokohama Flügels, which collapsed in November after their sponsor withdrew.

On top of Yoo, J-League sides have also signed up Korean internationals Hwang Sun-Hong, Noh Jung-Yoon, Choi Sung-Yong, Ha Seok-Ju, Kim Do-Hoon and Hong Myung-Bo.

"When I joined Sanfrecce Hiroshima in 1993, I was accused of abandoning my country," said two-time World Cup player Noh, who joined Cerezo Osaka after five years at Sanfrecce and one in the Dutch league.

"But whenever a Korean player joins a J-League club nowadays, everybody says it's a patriotic deed to get foreign currency," added the 27-year-old who will play alongside fellow World Cup veteran Hwang Sun-Hong.

Vissel Kobe, eternal strugglers in the league, have Choi, Ha and Kim.

"With Choi joining us, we have now three Koreans. I believe it gives additional power to our team," said Vissel coach Ryoichi Kawakatsu.

Hwang Myung-Bo left Bellmare Hiratsuka with Brazilian-born Japanese international Wagner Lopes and other players after Fujita decided to sell the club.

The Korean defensive midfielder is now with Kashiwa Reysol, while Lopes is expected to strengthen title contenders Nagoya Grampus Eight, with Dragan Stojkovic of Yugoslavia.

But J-League clubs are struggling to survive.

Reigning champions Kashima Antlers have let go of Brazilian Jorginho, while Jubilo Iwata, did not renew their contract with Dunga because of his wage demands.

J-LEAGUE RESPONDS TO ECONOMIC PRESSURES

Dunga, captain of Brazil at two World Cup finals, returned home after talks with Iwata collapsed. His annual salary was estimated at 165 million yen (1.4 US million dollars).

The Yomiuri Shimbun newspaper, co-owner of troubled Verdy Kawasaki, have withdrawn from the management of the two-time champions because of the drain on profits.

Verdy forced Brazilian-born Ruy Ramos to retire and Kazuyoshi Miura to move abroad to Croatia Zagreb, as it cut the playing staff from 41 to 25 and cut the salary bill of over one billion yen (8.3 million dollars) by three quarters.

Verdy president Nobuhisa Sakata said the club this season wants another title and capacity crowds to earn money.

But its remaining sponsor, Nippon Television Network, has already indicated the company will withdraw

if Verdy fail to remain in the first division.

The J-League has expanded to 16 teams in the first division and 10 in the second division this season with bottom two facing relegation to the second.

On the plus side, crowds do seem to have levelled out.

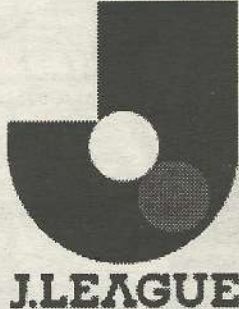
Average attendance last season was 11,982 people, up from 10,131 in 1997, but still almost 40 percent down from the best season in 1994.

In comparison with Australia, which has been averaging 5-6,000 over these last few years (with Spirit and Glory three times that this year), and with a much smaller population, the Ericsson Cup does not compare too badly.

Yoshiyuki Hasegawa scored a hat-trick and Tomoyuki Hirase four goals as Kashima Antlers of Japan trounced Sarawak of Malaysia 10-0 in the Asian Cup Winners Cup quarterfinals.

It was a second straight win for the Antlers after beating Sarawak 4-2 in an away game two weeks ago to secure a berth in the semi-finals next month. Once again this showed the gulf between the Asian superpowers of Soccer and the minnows like Malaysia.

**THE J-LEAGUE BEGAN
LAST WEEKEND. MANY
BELIEVE THIS WILL BE
ANOTHER TESTING
YEAR FOR THE FORMER
ASIAN POWER LEAGUE**



SINGAPORE'S 'GAZZA'!

Two years ago Ahmad Latiff Khamarudin was dropped by then national coach Barry Whitbread for arriving late for a match — but soon after he was forgiven.

Last year he was expelled from school for truancy — yet forgiven again after an appeal by national team manager Omar Ibrahim.

Last month he was benched for turning up late for a national team friendly against Fiji's pre-Olympic side — but he was forgiven yet again and brought on just 30 minutes into the match.

Last week the 20-year-old, touted by many as one of Singapore's brightest football hopes, went missing again.

He was absent from pre-Olympic team training sessions and in between he kept everyone at Singapore Armed Forces FC waiting for a photo shoot. He did not turn up.

This time, it was different because this was the military. This time the forgiving may only come after the punishment.

Latiff was charged for going Awol (absent without official leave) and sentenced to five days in detention.

Did he bring it upon himself?

Said SAFFC manager Kok Wai Leon to local media: "We cannot afford to overlook his mistakes all the time. Going Awol is a serious offence in the army and he must realise that."

"We will continue to counsel him but he must learn to be responsible for his actions."

In pleading his case, Latiff said that he was sick in the morning and was on his way to the Jurong Stadium when his motorcycle broke down along the East Coast Parkway.

But that, according to club and national team officials, was not the first time.

Peter Joseph, SAFFC's youth coach tasked with monitoring the player when he was enlisted, said that there were numerous occasions prior to Tuesday when he had gone missing.

The player, who broke on to the national scene after an outstanding performance in the 1995 Lion City Cup, has never had it right since then.

Why? Has he become a prima donna? Some people seem to think so.

Said Joseph: "I think there is this feeling in him that he is the only striker in Singapore now."

Added national team manager Omar Ibrahim: "He has a habit of giving lame excuses and expects that he be given the leeway. What the SAFFC has done is right."

But there are others who think that, coming from a broken home, he may lack the discipline to stay focused.

Rafi Ali, his former Geylang United team-mate and current national strike partner, said: "He is a man in his own world. We've spoken a few times but I have always left wondering if he had heard anything I had said."

Said Joseph: "Our coach Mladen Pralija has often found him not concentrating in a game."

Kok said that Latiff was under the illusion that "if I had a reason for doing something then it was okay."

Naive or ill-disciplined, one thing is for sure — if the detention does not act as a wake-up call, he may never play football for Singapore again.

Said Omar: "I will work closely with SAFFC to help him. But having said that, I am prepared to drop him if he does not improve."

As Soccer Weekly exclusively reported last week, after speaking with West Ham football director, Peter Storrie, the signing of South Korean players at the club was well off the mark.

"We have never directly contacted West Ham United and there has been

misunderstanding between us and several agents involved," Han Woong-Soo, deputy manager of LG Cheetahs, told AFP.

Han said he was dealing through FIFA-licensed agents representing Choi and West Ham.

"We were told to wait for a while,

SOUTH KOREANS IN 'MIX UP' AT HAMMERS

so we are waiting now," he said.

Han made the statement after he returned home empty-handed from London this week, where LG Cheetahs hoped to sign what it called a multi-million-dollar contract to transfer Choi to the English side.

Han's boss, President Kwon Hyuk-Chul of LG Sports, has insisted the deal was still on, saying the contract would be signed next week.

West Ham United reversed its earlier denial that it was interested in signing Choi, hinting it was seeking to get the top South

Korean striker because of possible income from South Korean TV rights.

Choi and another South Korean player, Kim Doh-Keun of Chunnam Dragons, returned home last week after training with the Hammers in Chadwell Heath.

"I've seen them in training for a couple of days and they look to be good players, but I'd like to have another look," West Ham team manager Harry Redknapp said, according to the West Ham United web site.

"Hopefully a lack of immediate finance won't let another club in to sign either Choi Young Soo and Kim

Doh-Keun, because ultimately the deal could be worth millions in terms of Far East TV rights," the team's web site said.

"One player though is up for military service — Harry Redknapp doesn't know which one yet — so until that is resolved, nothing is likely to happen," it said.

However, Choi, 26, finished his obligatory 30-month military service last month and Kim Doh-Keun, 27, has also served his military duty.

Choi Yong-Soo is considered to be one of Asia's hottest properties. The striker scored his country's only goal in the World Cup finals last summer.



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LAZIO GIVES NEW BOYS A FOOTBALL LESSON

Marcelo Salas nabbed two and skipper Nesta scored his first ever goal in Serie A as Lazio showed Salernitana why they are favourites for the Scudetto with a 6-1 demolition.

Lazio's 12th win in 14 matches keeps the Rome side four points ahead of Fiorentina, who moved ahead of title rivals Parma after beating them 2-1 at the Artemio Franchi stadium. At the bottom, Empoli is on 15 and Salernitana is second bottom on 20 together with Vicenza also on 20.

The win was Lazio's 12th in its last 13 games, and pushed its record to 15-6-3 for 51 points. Fiorentina has 47, followed by Milan with 46. Parma — which entered the day tied for second place — has 44 and is likely out of the title chase.

There are 10 games left in the season.

Belgian Luis Oliveira scored from a first-half free kick and Portugal's Rui Costa added a second-half penalty to give the Florentine side their first victory since captain Gabriel Batistuta was injured a month ago.

AC Milan, who defeated Piacenza at the San Siro with a header from Germany's Oliver Bierhoff, climb into third spot, a point behind Fiorentina and two ahead of Parma.

Crisis-hit Inter Milan's winless run stretched to four matches at Bari, where Yksel Osmanovski's 43rd minute shot gave the home side their first win since January.

The real hero of Lazio's victory was defender Paolo Negro who was selected only after passing a last minute fitness test.

Minutes after Ighli Vannucchi had turned in Václav Koloušek's cross to put Salernitana into a shock 31st minute lead, Negro cleared a shot from the same player off the line.

Then, in the 44th minute, Negro was on hand to equalise after goalkeeper Andrea Ivan failed to hold Sinisa Mihajlovic's free kick.

Straight after the break, Italy's Christian Vieri turned in Giuseppe Pancaro's cross and from there Lazio never looked back.

Chilean Salas finished off a four-man move in the 61st before adding his second of the match, and 13th of the season, off Sergio Conceicao's cross in the 79th minute.

Salvatore Fiesi put though his own net in the 82nd minute before Nesta, whose return from serious injury coincided with the start of Lazio's unbeaten run, backheeled his first league goal in the dying seconds.

For most of the first half in Florence Parma looked the more likely to win a match billed by Gazzetta dello Sport as "a championship semifi-

nal" to decide which side will challenge Lazio in the season's run-in.

In the fourth minute, Enrico Chiesa's 20-metre shot cannoned back off the bar and, on three occasions, strike partner Hernan Crespo missed the target with only Francesco Toldo to beat.

But in the 43rd minute Oliveira made the home fans briefly forget the absence of Batistuta with a free kick taken straight out of the Argentine's repertoire.

In the 56th minute, Rui Costa increased Fiorentina's advantage from the penalty spot after Gianluigi Buffon brought down Carmine Esposito with a goal looking certain.

Croat Mario Stanic pulled one back in the 64th minute but the visitors were left to rue their first half misses as Fiorentina celebrated their first win in five matches.

Milan won with a fortuitous 43rd minute header from Bierhoff, which went in off the bar, but rarely looked like taking further advantage of the 55th minute dismissal of Piacenza's defender Cleto Polonia.

Udinese moved into fifth place with 39 points by rallying to beat visiting AS Roma 2-1 in a wild finish. The last 10 minutes of the game saw two penalty kicks for Udinese — one missed, one made — plus another goal for the hosts, and Roma defender Aldair sent off.

AS Roma looked set for their first away win since April when Fabio Junior put them into a first half lead and Marcio Amoroso missed a 82nd minute penalty for Udinese.

But Dane Martin Jorgensen levelled the scores in the 84th and, four minutes later, the referee awarded Udinese a controversial second penalty.

Roberto Bettin first awarded a free kick on the edge of the area, but then consulted his linesman and decided the foul had taken place inside the box.



Marcelo Salas ... arguably the best buy this year in Serie A

Amoroso gratefully made amends for his earlier miss and Roma's Brazilian captain Aldair was sent off for protesting.

Elsewhere, Inter Milan continued to struggle without Ronaldo. The Brazilian superstar, still battling knee tendinitis, attended a beatification ceremony at the Vatican, while his teammates lost 1-0 to Bari.

Inter has lost three of its last four league outings.

In other games Sunday, veteran striker Giuseppe Signori's goal with four minutes left lifted Bologna past Venezia 2-1; Cagliari edged Vicenza 1-0, and Perugia beat Empoli 3-1. Sampdoria hosted Juventus in the late game Sunday night. Juve won 2-1.

Next week is the Milan derby, Inter v Milan and Vince Grella's Empoli hosts the mighty Lazio. Grella is currently with the Young Socceroos in preparation for the WYC in Nigeria in April.

In a brief roundup of other games in Italy, in Serie B lowly Reggina had a good 0-0 draw with top placed Verona, while Pescara thumped Genoa 4-1 and Napoli won at home, 1-0 over Cesena. Cosenza and Brescia drew 1-1.

Verona is still on top of Serie B with 50 points, second is Torino on 47 and third is Treviso also on 47. At the bottom Cremonese is struggling, bottom with 17, Lucchese sits second bottom on 21.

Next week, the pick is Genoa v Torino.

Meanwhile mad Brazilian soccer star Edmundo was sentenced to 4 1/2 years in "open prison" for his part in a 1995 car accident that killed three people.

In Brazil, those sentenced to "open prison" must spend daytimes in jail but can go home at night.

Edmundo Alves de Souza Neto, who plays for Fiorentina was a part of Brazil's World Cup team last summer, has the right to appeal, lawyer Michel Assef said. The 28-year old forward remained in Italy with his team.

"Edmundo is going to wait and see what happens; he's hopeful the sentence will be overturned," said Assef, who intends to file the appeal at the Justice Tribunal of Rio.

"The sentence is absurd and unjust," added Assef, who alleged the other motorist involved in the crash was responsible for the accident.

The crash occurred when the pickup truck Edmundo was driving collided with a car and flipped over, smashing into a pole and killing three passengers.

Ronaldo went to a beatification ceremony at St. Peter's Basilica instead of attending his club's Italian League game. Ronaldo and his girlfriend, Brazilian actress and model Suzana Werner, sat in the rear of the church.

Hampered by tendinitis in both knees, Ronaldo has appeared in only 10 of Inter Milan's 24 Serie A matches this season. He has six goals.



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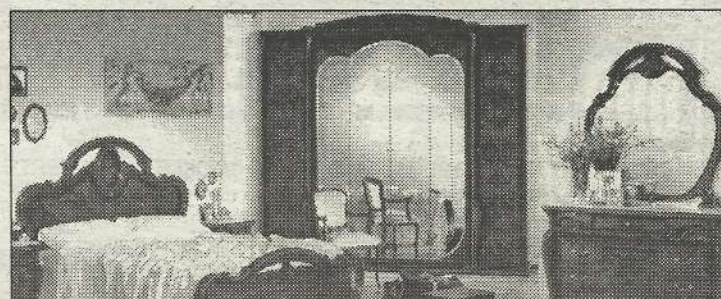


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Soccer Weekly

Pele has seemingly given his royal imprimatur to Germany's bid for the 2006 World Cup, thus putting the kybosh on rival bids from England and Africa.

"I would prefer Africa, but I believe there's little doubt it will be Germany," Pele told the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*.

"[The Germans'] problems with the English and their earlier promises to the Germans are known, and Africa isn't ready yet."

Germany has accused England, also in the running, of renege-

ing on promises to back their bid in exchange for supporting

England's hosting of the 1996 European championships.

Pele was also skeptical of Brazil's chances at the moment, adding his country and Argentina once talked about teaming up



to joint host soccer's premier event. "Afterwards, the whole thing was forgotten," he said. "In the population, too, the mood isn't there, that people are getting excited about it. We don't even have an organizing committee."

Pele said FIFA president Sepp Blatter's controversial plan to hold the World Cup every second year was soundly rejected by FIFA's new committee of soccer greats at this week's inaugural meeting.

IT'S A FAIT ACCOMPLI, SAYS PELE

Only Michel Platini, who headed France's World Cup effort, supported the plan on the new FIFA Football Committee. Blatter has since publicly shelved the idea, at least until 2009.

"Almost everyone voted against the proposal. Bobby Charlton, Johan Cruyff, Franz Beckenbauer, George Weah and so forth," Pele said. "We told him [Blatter], it's more important to think first about the 2002 World Cup in South Korea and Japan — there are enough problems there."

Pele personally felt furthering soccer in developing lands was more vital than turning the World Cup into a biennial event.

"And Charlton gave us something very interesting to think about," the Brazilian said. "The last two World Cups have been weak in quality — if we staged it every two years, people would lose interest."

Pele also said the Football committee discussed rule changes, adding he was opposed to having two referees on the field or a camera trained on the goal line.

Instead, he would prefer putting another line judge behind the goal who could make instant calls similar to tennis.

But the committee's general impression was that referees aren't well-prepared because rules aren't coordinated and enforced the same way world-wide.

"That's why we voted unanimously, that all rules should be applied on the following principle: if tackling is forbidden, then it must really be penalized everywhere."

FRENCH GIRLS ALLEGED TO HAVE BEEN OFFERED TO REFS

For those ladies who fancy refs this should be of interest. Soccer agent Ljubomir Barin told a French court he helped Girondins Bordeaux attempt to bribe referees with offers of gifts and girls before European Cup matches in the 1980s.

The Croat is one of four men on trial charged with fraud and bribery. The other three are the club's ex-general manager, the former secretary-general and another agent.

"All the European referees wanted to come to Bordeaux," Barin told the court.

He said he had offered his services to then Bordeaux president Claude Bez, who died last year, after Girondins "got robbed"

by a refereeing decision in a European Cup match against Hamburg SV in 1981.

After that he had received 500,000 francs ahead of each European Cup match to ensure there was no repeat.

The prosecutor asked a French court for a two-year prison sentence and two million francs (\$350,000) fine for an agent accused of attempting to bribe referees on behalf of Girondins Bordeaux in the 1980s.

Ljubomir Barin is accused of organizing offers of gifts and girls to referees at Bordeaux's European Cup matches for which the French club allegedly spent 4.2 million francs without keeping records.

The Croat and former Bordeaux general manager Didier Couecou both face two-year prison sentences, the Croat with one year suspended and the ex-club official 18 months suspended and a fine of one million francs (\$175,000).

The court has been trying to find out what happened to the sum of \$800,000 spent by the club between 1983 and 1988.

Former club secretary-general

Herve Bizot faces a suspended

four-month jail sentence and

50,000 francs fine. He said

the money was not meant

to bribe referees but "to

create a favorable envi-

ronment around them."

Portuguese agent

Licio d'Onofrio, allegedly

involved in player transfers

during which 33 million

francs disappeared from the

club's coffers, faces a suspended four-

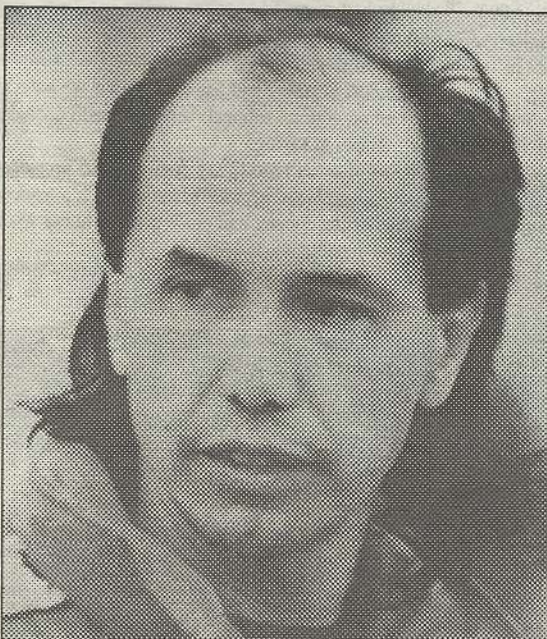
month sentence and one million francs

(\$175,000) fine.



COACH NOT 'PSYCHOLOGICALLY' FIT TO LEAD GREEK GIANTS!

Argentine Juan Ramon Rocha, who once guided Panathinaikos to the semi-finals of the European Champions Cup, has returned to coach the team again, the Athens club announced.



Yeah Yeah ... new man at the helm at Panathinaikos, Juan Ramon Rocha.

He replaced Greek Vassilis Daniel, who was fired two days after the team lost 1-0 at home to PAOK Salonica and dropped four points behind league-leader Olympiakos Piraeus.

The terse two-line announcement gave no details of Rocha's contract.

Rocha, once a talented midfielder with Panathinaikos, coached the team between March 1994 and October 1996.

Under his leadership, Panathinaikos won two league titles and advanced all the way to the European Champions Cup semi-finals before losing to Ajax Amsterdam.

Panathinaikos qualified for the Champions League this season, but

failed to advance to the quarter-finals.

After 21 rounds, Panathinaikos were on 46 points, sharing second place with crosstown AEK in the Greek first division.

"After Sunday's events he was not feeling psychologically ready to complete his work," the announcement said.

FIFA President

Sepp Blatter

said harmonizing the interna-

tional soccer calendar could

not be done before 2005,

making 2009 the first year in

which his plan to stage the

World Cup every two years

could be adopted.

"We want to have a master calendar, but it is possible only after 2004. Contracts have already been signed for competitions," Blatter told a news conference.

"We could start in 2005," Blatter said of the proposal to harmonize the soccer calendar.

He said it would not be possible to hold a World Cup in 2008 because the Olympic Games and the

Confederations Cup would be held that year.

Blatter has already promised that, if his controversial two-year plan is enacted, the World Cup would not be held in the same year as the summer Olympic Games.

"Therefore 2009 would be the first opportunity to start ... and this is a possibility. This is not only an idea, it has become a possibility if the master calendar is successful," Blatter said.

Last month European soccer's governing body,

UEFA, forced Blatter to

back down on his plan to

stage the World Cup every

two years, but neither side

ruled out the possibility of

realizing the plan in the

longer term.

Blatter said the fact that

the two-year idea was

being discussed and that it

resulted in the plan to push

for a harmonized calendar

was a plus for the game.

"Even if we only reach

a coordinated calendar

then it is a win for foot-

ball," Blatter said.

He also reiterated his

view that the World Cup

host nation should be cho-

sen on a rotating basis,

making Africa and

Oceania next in line for

the competition, which is

good news for Australia.

With all the attention midweek on the Champions League, the UEFA Cup quietly got on with things. In Italy, Giuseppe Signori was hailed as a hero after leading Bologna to a 3-0 home rout of Olympique Lyon in the UEFA Cup quarterfinals.

Signori, who has turned his career around with 13 league goals this season, scored twice and set up the third as Bologna virtually booked a place in the tournament's semifinals for the first time.

"Unstoppable Signori," ran a headline in *Gazzetta dello Sport* after his superb first leg performance.

Bologna coach Carlo Mazzone enthused: "If Signori keeps playing like this, he'll deserve to join the national team again."

Signori, three times Lazio's leading marksman in the early 1990s, left the Rome club in 1997 for Sampdoria where he never hit top form, scoring just three goals in 17 matches.

Following advice from the similarly rejuvenated Roberto Baggio, Signori signed for Bologna in the close season and led them to Intertoto Cup success.

"I called Baggio and asked him about Bologna before I signed," Signori said. "He told me: 'Go there. You'll become a new man.'"

Baggio, written off as a force, soared back to the top with 23 goals when he played for Bologna last season and eventually regained his national team place.

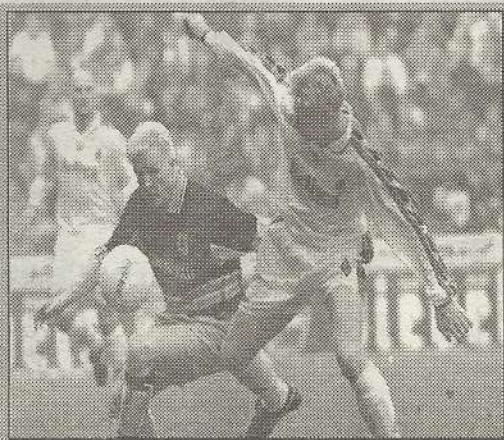
Parma and AS Roma, Italy's two other UEFA Cup representatives, scored valuable late away goals in 2-1 defeats at Girondins Bordeaux and Atletico Madrid respectively.

Compiled by

EUROPE

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BAYERN'S BUNDESLIGA BANDWAGON JUST KEEPS ROLLING ON



Feldoff of Moenchengladbach (r) battles in their 2-0 win over 1860.

Bayern Munich, chasing almost every season team record in the Bundesliga books, has beaten SC Freiburg 2-0 to extend its record string of scoreless matches to six.

FC Kaiserslautern also fought to a hard 1-1 draw against a sixth-place Hertha Berlin side backed by 55,000 cheering fans at Olympia stadium, and Dortmund edged Bochum 1-0 courtesy of Lars Ricken's 29th minute goal.

Munich rested five starters from the Champions Cup match three days prior against Kaiserslautern and played uninspired against a Freiburg side that is winless in five outings.

But Bayern is so good, it wins with even mediocre performances against its German rivals. The Bavarians also got help in the 30th minute when Freiburg defender Joern Schwinkendorf headed a sharply angled cross by Munich striker Ali Daei into his own net.

Daei sealed the win with his 79th minute shot on an assist from Mehmet Scholl, a former German international coming back from a year-long injury.

"It was a hard-fought workmanlike win. But I'm satisfied after the tough match Wednesday in the Champions Cup," said Munich coach Ottmar Hitzfeld.

Munich, is mounting attack on the league record books, with many of the team records held by the famous Franz Beckenbauer-led Munich of the early 70s.

The Bavarians could eclipse the record of 25 victories by the end of the 34-match schedule as well as fewest goals yielded, most scored, most away victories and best goal differential, among others.

"There could be a lot of dreams come true," said Munich midfielder Stefan Effenberg.

In other matches, U.S. national team midfielder Claudio Reyna scored twice to lead VfL Wolfsburg to a 4-1 victory over north German rival Hamburger SV. Stuttgart beat Frankfurt 2-0 and cellar-dweller Moenchengladbach won for just the second time in 20 matches, upsetting 1860 Munich 2-0.

On Friday, Duisburg blasted Rostock 4-1 and Nuremberg routed Schalke 3-0.

Second-place Kaiserslautern turned in a poised per-

Results of Belgian First Division

Lokeren	1	Germinal Ekeren	1
Genk	2	Charleroi	1
Ostend	1	Westerlo	1
Ghent	4	Beveren	1
Anderlecht	3	Lommel	0

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Genk	24	16	5	3	53	27	53
Club Bruges	24	16	4	4	46	22	52
Excelsior Mouscron	25	13	7	5	54	38	46
Anderlecht	24	13	5	6	48	33	44
Standard Liege	25	14	2	9	45	27	44
Ghent	25	12	8	5	45	40	44
Sint-Truiden	24	11	6	7	33	28	39
Lokeren	24	11	5	8	47	40	38
Lierse	24	11	3	10	45	37	36
Germinal Ekeren	25	10	5	10	37	37	35
Westerlo	24	9	4	11	44	43	31
Eendracht Aalst	24	8	5	11	34	41	29
Harelbeke	24	7	8	9	31	36	29
Charleroi	24	4	10	10	29	37	22
Lommel	25	5	4	16	23	42	19
Beveren	25	4	5	16	25	51	17

LES MURRAY ON ... PRESIDENTIAL APPOINTMENTS



country hosted, left Roberto Baggio, soon to be European and World Player of the Year, on the bench and using the laborious plodder Nicola Bertin in his place.

He of course lost the game and his coaching head. I for one wasn't crying.

It happened in the same short period. A matter of a couple of weeks.

Italian front runners Fiorentina lost their predatory striker Gabriel Batistuta with a bad injury and then couldn't win a match.

Around the same time in Spain Real Madrid coach Guus Hiddink was given the shaft, barely more than half way through his first season, with the European Champions Cup still in his sights and the Spanish Liga still not completely lost.

In came John Toshack, a previously sacked Real coach, who then lost his first league game and, blessed by a cosy European Cup quarter final draw, couldn't beat Dynamo Kiev at home.

What does all this tend to demonstrate (apart from the self-serving lunacy of Real president Lorenzo Sanz)? That players are more important than coaches. Coaches who are given all the credit for the victories and are blamed for all the losses.

Examples are ripe in the history of football. How often have we seen a coach lose a streak of matches and then make wholesome, six or seven team changes and start to win? What does that say about the wisdom of his selections in the first place?

I recall the legendary Ferenc Puskas recalling the days of the great Hungary he captained in the 1950s. How coach Gusztav Sebes, credited with building that immortal team, went through his ritual of chalk and blackboard and lessons of tactical geometry before each game, only for Puskas, enroute through the tunnel, to tell his teammates: "Forget all that bull, let's just do it like we always do."

Coaches may of course have some things to do with some victories but, much more surely, have a lot to do with some disastrous losses.

Among my favourites is Italy's Azeglio Vicini who, in the semi finals of the 1990 World Cup his

Before Toshack was reappointed at Madrid, a previous coach of the club, Fabio Capello, was offered a return, effective immediately. He declined, preferring to wait until the start of the new season so he can build his own team.

What does that say about Capello, if not the fact that he had no confidence in revitalising an existing team which included some of the world's best: Raul, Suter, Mijatovic, Savio, Roberto Carlos, Seedorf, Karembeu, Redondo and Hierro.

He must have been joking.

The point of all this is not that all coaches are balloons of hot air.

Of course some of them have had a major influence on their teams and a few of the better ones have actually been responsible for giving us fans some joy in the way their teams have played.

Rather it's a claim that coaches are only as good as their players or the performances of their players. True, players can be a pain, too.

Putanas as some Italians call them. But let free to perform, they are the ones who will win you the games.

The football sickness, the sporting sickness, responsible for all this is the notion that the cause of failure rests with a central individual who is far easier to sack than the collective lot of the players.

Perhaps that central individual is not the coach but the club president who appointed him in the first place.

There was a recent, under-reported landmark occurrence on this subject when the president of Paris St Germain resigned — effectively sacking himself — for having appointed a coach (Alain Giresse) who couldn't achieve the rights results.

Maybe other clubs should have taken a leaf out of his book.

TROUBLE AT REAL CORRAL, PLAYERS FIGHT AFTER GAME

Clarence Seedorf and Fernando Hierro have shown that Inter is not the only club that has a penchant for a punch-up post game.

Seedorf was fined 5 million pesetas (US\$33,000) and Hierro half that much for the altercation following Wednesday's 1-1 draw against Dynamo Kiev in the European Champions Cup quarterfinals first leg.

Spanish newspapers say Hierro insulted Seedorf during an argument over who would take a free kick.

After the game, words turned to blows in the locker room and teammates had to separate the two.

Seedorf, 22, was fined more because the team already had warned him after similar incidents with defender Ivan Campos and Montenegrin forward Predrag Mijatovic.

"Seedorf is young and has a future but we have to put him on notice," national daily El Mundo quoted a team official as saying.

Spanish news reports say Real Madrid president Lorenzo Sanz is fed up with what he sees as a team of big-ego prima donnas, and plans to clean house when the season ends.

Real Madrid is lagging in seventh place in the Spanish league with the second worst defence.

Results of Luxembourg First Division

Jeunesse Esch	5	Aris Bonnevoie	0
Union Luxembourg	3	Mondercange	2
Sporting Mertzig	1	Avenir Beggen	4
Spora Luxembourg	0	Petange	1
Dudelange	2	Grevenmacher	1
Hobscheid	6	Wiltz	0

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dudelange	14	10	3	1	25	8	33
Avenir Beggen	15	10	2	3	39	9	32
Union Luxembourg	14	9	5	0	34	6	32
Jeunesse Esch	14	10	1	3	40	9	31
Sporting Mertzig	14	7	3	4	32	22	24
Grevenmacher	15	7	2	6	27	19	23
Mondercange	15	6	3	6	18	26	21
Aris Bonnevoie	14	4	2	8	18	35	14
Wiltz	13	3	2	8	13	37	11
Hobscheid	14	3	0	11	29	38	9
Petange	15	2	2	11	7	45	8
Spora Luxembourg	15	2	1	12	13	42	7



Seedorf was fined heavily after an altercation with teammate Fernando Hierro.

Compiled by

UK

Soccer Weekly

INTER V MAN UTD: PRESS REACTION

As you would expect the UK Press, particularly the tabloids, had a field day after the big game between Man Utd and Inter. Funny, not too long ago poor old Becks was the object of their hatred. 'Fergie's Inter Wonderland' was one London paper's headline: 'Even if the Brazilian superstar (Ronaldo) had been at fever pitch at Old Trafford he wouldn't have had a prayer of eclipsing David Beckham' gushed the tabloid.

Another came up with the classic 'Beck's Fiz'

'Beckham gained sweet revenge on Diego Simeone to claim a precious moment in his young life. He was world-class as he proved that he is one of the greatest providers United have has ever possessed.

'David Beckham closed the chapter on his World Cup misery last night with a touch of humility as Manchester United wrote another page of Euro

glory', said one Manchester paper.

'United's glamour boy turned on the heat in front of a gloating Old Trafford crowd and then forgave the man who was at the centre of his France '98 agony' boomed another English paper.

The London Evening Standard however sounded a cautious note: 'Man Utd only half-way to the semis' was their headline. 'Alex Ferguson has had too many European disappointments to consider this Italian job any more than half done.

'For all their pace and momentum in an enthralling game, Ferguson knows that his team would not be taking the security of a 2-0 lead to Milan in a fortnight but for the enduring excellence of Peter Schmeichel and the critical intervention of Henning Berg in injury time' they wrote.

However, the baby born to Becks and his Spice Girl also encroached on the reporting. The Mirror reported

Beckham as saying: "This has topped everything off but you can't compare football and having a baby. The feeling tonight can't be repeated."

Meanwhile over in Italy, Gazzetto Dello Sport ran with the headline, 'Rabbia Simeone', which, if Soccer Weekly's Italiano is correct, means 'Angry Simeone'.

And the Corriere Della Sera ran with the Captain Obvious headline of the day, 'Inter Perde a Manchester' which means Inter lose at Manchester.

From the French based Herald International Tribune came these words.

'The last time Diego Simeone and David Beckham met on a soccer field, the English were left complaining about the referee. In the rematch, Simeone felt he was the victim of a miscarriage of justice,' referring to his last minute header that was disallowed.



The long awaited rematch: Simeone v Beckham II.

Stunned Crystal Palace players launched a blistering attack on chairman Mark Goldberg as the club went into administration.

Midfielder Simon Rodger, Palace's longest-serving player, who has been with the club for eight years, was devastated by the news and accused Goldberg of hiding the true extent of his financial crisis from the players.

In an outspoken attack he claimed the chairman had wrecked their promotion dream by selling many of the top stars in a desperate attempt to keep the club afloat.

But Goldberg, once one of Britain's richest businessmen, revealed how owning Palace cost him £23million. Rodger said: "The club is in the worst state I have ever known.

"It is difficult for us to concentrate on what is going on on the pitch when we are having to worry whether we will be paid.

"Mark Goldberg's heart is in the right place, but he has been naive. We have just got to try and survive the rest of the season now. Then maybe it is time for somebody else to take over.

"Goldberg said he would hold monthly meetings with us to keep us informed, but he has not told us anything while this has been going on.

"If he had just kept the squad together from the start of the season we would be at the top with Sunderland instead of near the bottom."

Peter Schmeichel will be able to take his pick of Italian clubs in the summer.

Roma and Udinese are both looking for new goalkeepers before the new season, and Schmeichel's return to form in recent months has put him high on their wanted lists.

AC Milan might also surprise their rivals with a late Schmeichel swoop as current keeper Sebastiano Rossi is unsettled. The big plus is that Schmeichel comes on a free after being rewarded for his loyalty by United, who will release him with two years left on his contract.

Schmeichel can expect to collect around £3million in wages, plus a luxury villa, for what probably will be the final two years of his distinguished career.

Agents from Italy, meanwhile, are trying to secure a move for 22-year-old keeping sensation Gianluigi Buffon in the opposite direction. They hope to make Old Trafford their first port of call.

The stumbling block could be the Parma star's reported £15m price tag, plus his wage demands of around £2.5m-a-year after tax.

PALACE IN DISARRAY, GOLDBERG SLAMMED BY PLAYERS

If you had read last week's Four Diegos interview with Man City's Soccerroo Danny 'The Tyro' Tiatto, you would have got an idea of how dirty Millwall is.

And here is the proof your honour. Millwall, the dirtiest team in the country, could be fined £30,000. Ten of their players have been sent off in 40 matches this season, equalling the total that earned Norwich a suspended fine of £30,000 two years ago.

The Lions are just one sending-off short of the English record for a season, with no fewer than nine different players having seen red.

Furious Robbie Fowler has been ordered to say sorry to Graeme Le Saux over his gay slur controversy.

Liverpool striker Fowler was adamant he would not apologise to Le Saux as he believed he was the victim of a physical attack by the Chelsea full-back.

But the Professional Footballers' Association last night stepped in by urging Fowler to resolve the row.

They offered him an olive branch by explaining that the Football Association would take any conciliatory move into account when it comes to dishing out fines and suspensions.

And PFA chiefs will continue to thrash out a peace pact this morning between the two players who face an FA misconduct charge for their running feud during Saturday's clash at Stamford Bridge.

Chief executive Gordon Taylor said: "We are working towards a gesture of public reconciliation. We are hoping for a handshake and apologies on both sides. Surely that has to be a sensible solution."

Taylor was not impressed when he was told that Fowler was reluctant to apologise. But Liverpool chief executive Peter Robinson and Chelsea manager Gianluca Vialli are believed to have agreed in principle to getting the two players together.

Taylor's assistant Brendon Batson has spoken to Robinson and also Le Saux. Batson was shocked when Fowler refused to co-operate, but, after talks

with his club, the PFA were last night hopeful of a friendly resolution.

The England striker was ready to offer the hand of friendship, but it is believed he felt he has nothing to apologise for as he was the victim.

And he told a close friend of his anger and bewilderment at Le Saux's claims that he provoked the attack.

Fowler insisted that the Chelsea man elbowed him THREE times, before the off-the-ball incident which was picked up by TV cameras.

The friend said Fowler believes Le Saux is using claims of "homosexual taunts", to disguise his own aggression.

"Robbie is distraught, because he was assaulted three times by Le Saux, and yet he is being painted as the villain of the piece," the pal said.

Joe Kinnear admitted he was fortunate not to have died from his heart attack.

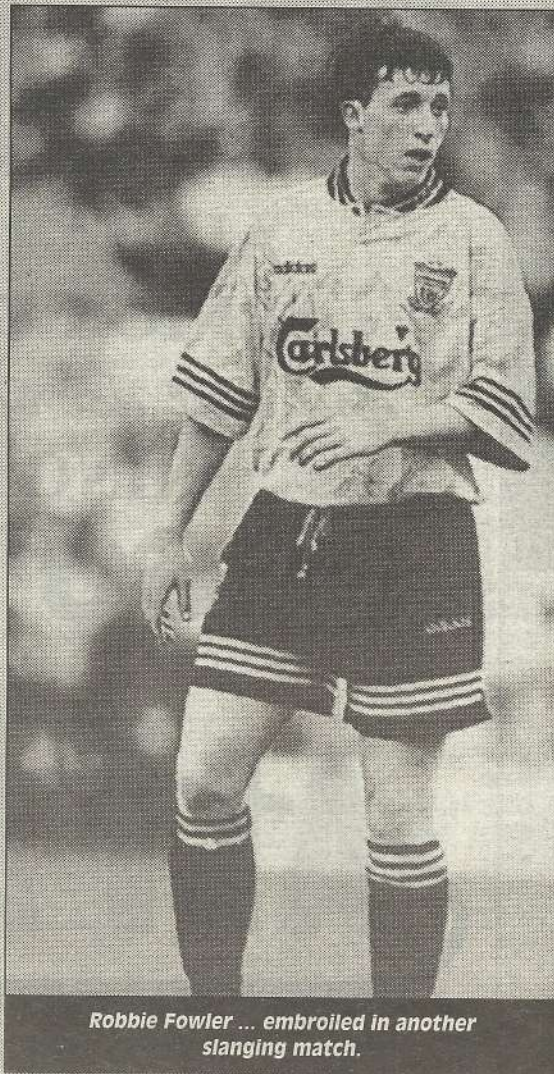
Speaking from a Sheffield hospital bed, the Wimbledon manager revealed he had suffered the attack an hour before his team's Premiership match at Hillsborough.

"It was a warning," said Kinnear. "If I had been at any place other than where I was, I dread to think what might have happened. I'm lucky.

"I had it all. The chest pains, numb arm and sweating. I needed help. I was in trouble.

"Wednesday called their doctor, put me into a medical room that would shame some hospitals and made tests. Within minutes I was on my way to a hospital that was magnificent. I was put into intensive care and after further tests into an ordinary ward. It was hairy.

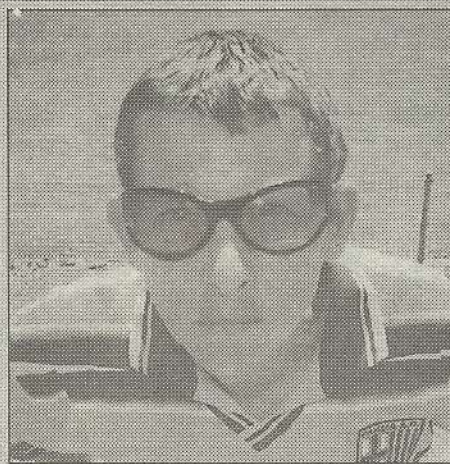
"I wonder what might have happened if I had



Robbie Fowler ... embroiled in another slanging match.

been alone in my hotel room or with the team on our coach in the middle of nowhere."

UK WITH CRAZY CRAIG WILSON



In 1999 there are over 400 soccer fanzines being published in the British Isles. Fanzines are literally that — unofficial magazines written by fans. Unkempt, disrespectful, and highly amusing, fanzines have revolutionised football writing in the UK, and without them there would certainly have been no "Fever Pitch".

Most fanzines are based around the experiences of supporters at a single club, and provide an excellent way for Australian based supporters to keep in touch with what's really going on at their favourite club — on the terraces and in the pubs, as well as on the field.

RED NEWS (PO Box 384, London, WC1N 3RJ, England) is now onto its 50th issue. With so much having happened at Manchester United over the past ten years, it looks at the impact of Ferguson, Cantona, and a wheelbarrow full of silverware.

With them have come merchandising, the inability of locals to afford tickets, and now Murdoch, and not all Man United fans welcome the changes. Red News is a great way of keeping this world-wide tribe informed.

LEYTON ORIENTEER (2 Chelmsford Court, Chelmsford Road, Southgate, N14 4JJ, England) The old Orienteer was one of the first football fanzines, carrying Leyton Orient match reports, letters and pub reviews.

The 'Ear' may be impenetrable to outsiders, with its criticism of management and players, but the humour and love of Orient are there for all to see. Perennial losers, Orient are based in a predominantly Asian neighbourhood, and have made huge steps towards bringing the new community into the club. The zine reflects that community feel. As Cockney as a jellied eel biriani.

CITY GENT (PO Box 56, Bradford, BD13 4YU, England) Another ground-breaker, Bradford's City Gent was once as famous for its reviews of curry houses as it was for news from Valley Parade. Clad in the claret and amber of the team, the fanzine is well respected by everyone within the English game (my copy even has a letter from Ron Atkinson in it!) and is now in its fifteenth season. After the Bradford fire, the City Gent was a vital conduit for an outpouring of grief and

anger that have led to the ground improvements of the nineties. Unfortunately, the curry reviews seem to have disappeared — after fifteen years they must have covered every restaurant in Bradford?

A LOVE SUPREME (1 Hodgson's Building, Stadium Way, Monkwearmouth, Sunderland, SR5 1BT, England) and its stable-mate, **SEX & CHOCOLATE**, are probably the best club-based fanzines in Britain right now. The former is printed in full colour, sold from its own shop, and retails an extensive line of merchandise.

And yet it never fails to entertain through humour, nostalgia, and constructive criticism. Coach Peter Reid has brought a brand of optimistic and exciting football with him, and the move to a new out-of-town stadium was handled in a sensitive and positive manner. These fanzines mirror the upbeat attitude at the club, without being hagiographic. Excellent!

[When sending for information on fanzines, always remember to include an International Reply Coupon.]

It's a rather indelicate subject, but a fascinating report has just been couriered to the Crazy office. Surveying spotty English youths in regard to their sexual preferences, a Pommie rubber goods manufacturer discovered that the greatest aid to sexual endeavour is a three point win. It seems that goal difference has replaced cup size as the vital statistic. They also detected that the average sexual act

takes place at 11.45pm on a Saturday.

Now leaving aside below or above-average sexual acts (when do they take place, and is there such a thing?), this points to a single eventuality. "Match of the Day", which ends at quarter to midnight, comes first. So to speak.

Might this particular prophylactic producer consider shirt sponsorship (and try saying that at 11.45pm on a Saturday)? The Premier League has been touting the idea of advertising on match officials jumpers for some time. There have so far been no takers.

The Crazy Gang crafted a letter suggesting OPSM, but to date we have received no reply (perhaps they couldn't see the typewriter keys?)

It leads us to a story in "Welsh Football" magazine. As of this season, match officials are wearing black kit with red trim where once there was white. "There have already been comments that the loss of the white trimming makes it harder for referees to pick up signals from their assistants in floodlit games," says the rag.

"Only time will tell if it is just an adjustment period, or if there is a genuine optical problem. I only know that blind men don't use red sticks."

What can they mean?

There are 30,000 qualified referees in Britain. By contrast there are only 20,000 qualified opticians — which may account for the shortage of eyewear. "Give 'Em Beans", the Barrow fanzine recounts that Spanish scientists have discovered that fans may indeed have grounds for singing "Where's your glasses referee?"

The Iberian investigators learned that by the time a match official's eyeball has registered the position of each player in an offside situation, they 'may be metres from where they started'. When an event takes place in your peripheral vision, your eyeball instinctively moves to track it.

"Although this move seems instant," says the account, "it actually takes one-third of a second to get the object into view".

In the worse case scenario, attackers and defenders could be five metres apart by the time a linesman spots them.

The Referees Association has sought to play down the findings by stressing that match officials 'use commonsense when interpreting rules'. Which is just as well. Their eyesight obviously can't be trusted.

Crazy K and I were recently discussing our old mate Gregor Samsa. A passionate Dukla Prague fan, Gregor awoke one morning from uneasy dreams to find himself transformed into a giant insect. Depressed that his replica jersey wouldn't accommodate the two extra limbs, his day was ruined when he missed a 4-3 defeat of Sparta by falling into a cockroach trap while queuing for a pie outside the ground.

It could have been worse, said K. As he reminded me, Gregor could always get into the Upper Moravian Cup Final, even without a ticket. He just crawled under the door.

"But imagine what life would be like turning left on Gary Rowell Avenue, making a right at Gary Rowell Terrace, and traversing Gary Rowell Way," said K, getting all allegorical on me.

You'd pass the Gary Rowell Sportshall, and cross over Gary Rowell Bridge which of course spans the River Rowell.

That's what it would have been like if "We all live[d] in a Gary Rowell world".

Pommie artist Neil Young recently won a competition at a Wearmouth gallery for a work entitled 'In the town where I was born ...'. It featured a skillfully detoured Ordnance Survey map of Wearside, with every single feature, from yacht clubs to railway stations renamed after the enigmatic eighties striker.

It sounded nightmarish to me. Kafkaesque almost.

Email Crazy Craig at magicsponge@hotmail.com

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Compiled by and written by

Daryl Katz

UK

Premier League &

Cup highlights

KANU JUST CAN'T STAY OUT OF THE HEADLINES!

Arsenal kept alive their chances of a second consecutive league and cup double when they accounted for Derby County 1-0 in a physical and sometimes bad tempered clash at Highbury on Saturday.

Derby arrived prepared for a battle, clearly eager to make their presence felt against an Arsenal midfield missing the dynamic French duo of Emmanuel Petit and Patrick Vieira.

Dennis Bergkamp, Nicolas Anelka and Marc Overmars looked threatening early for the home side while Paolo Wanchope, Dean Sturridge and Deon Burton provided the cutting edge for Jim Smith's Rams.

the turn was weak and straight at David Seaman.

Derby proved highly competitive in midfield in the opening period. Ray Parlour assumed additional responsibility in the absence of Petit and Vieira as a series of rash challenges went in from both teams.

On 21 minutes, Wanchope climbed to win a header and Burton set up Darryl Powell, who fired a low shot just wide. Three minutes later, Wanchope nodded on a Sturridge cross, but Burton miskicked badly as Derby pressed forward in search of the opening goal.

The midfield battle continued in uncompromising fashion, while Marc

the resulting free kick just past a post.

After 36 minutes some eccentric defending from Martin Keown saw him almost chip his own goalkeeper, but the England defender managed to recover and stopped the ball crossing the line.

Five minutes from half time, the irrepressible Parlour unleashed a vicious shot which had Russel Hoult struggling for the first time in the match.

In first half stoppage time, Dixon crossed from the right, but Fredrik Ljungberg's resulting shot bounced just over the bar.

Arsenal emerged determined after the interval, and proceeded to take control of the match.

After 50 minutes, Overmars went close with a curling shot following another teasing run, but the ball flew just wide.

A minute later Overmars surged forward again as Arsenal turned up the heat. After 54 minutes, Overmars crossed for Parlour, who shot wide before the Dutch winger launched a long range effort of his own which flashed past an upright.

Derby found themselves under increasing pressure, restricted to the occasional break. On 57 minutes a long ball out of defence found Wanchope, who beat Tony Adams and unleashed a powerful low drive, drawing a fine save from Seaman.

Just after the hour, the Arsenal onslaught continued as Lee Dixon forced Hoult into another save with a long range shot from the right.

Arsenal were dominant by now and Bergkamp turned inside Lee Carsley to curl a shot just over the bar. A minute later Bergkamp's intelligent chip found Anelka eight yards out, but his header was straight at Hoult.

After 71 minutes Arsenal fashioned their best chance to that point. Fine work from Bergkamp and Anelka saw the young French striker shoot from 12 yards, but the ball came back off a post with Hoult beaten.

Derby began to wilt under the increasing

pressure as substitute Nwankwo Kanu set up Lee Dixon, who sent another powerful shot just over the bar.

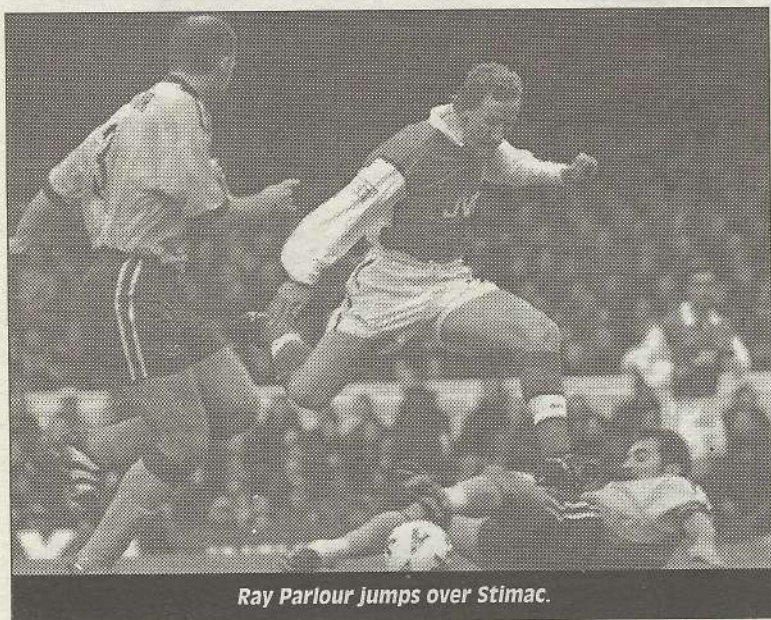
Fifteen minutes from time Kanu released Parlour, who found Overmars 20 yards out. The result was another shot just wide, and it was followed by a further Parlour effort from long range.

Ten minutes from time Arsenal went close yet again as Kanu retrieved a wayward cross from fellow substitute Kaba Diawara.

Derby were destined to hold on for a replay at Pride Park.

However, the visitors' brave resistance was broken a minute from time. A Keown shot following a corner took a deflection and fell into the path of Kanu, who gleefully turned and hammered the rebound home to secure a first goal for his new club.

There was still time for Diawara to go close to a second goal in the dying seconds, but the goal from Nigerian international



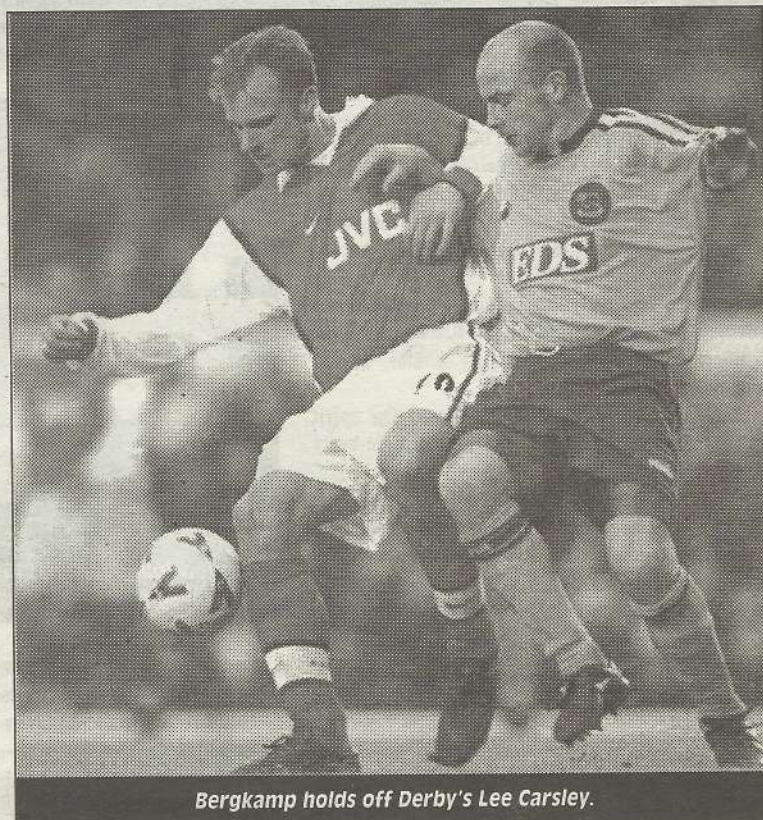
Ray Parlour jumps over Stimac.

Despite an open start to the game however, neither side managed to create clear goalscoring opportunities.

The first opening came on 13 minutes, as Sturridge won an aerial challenge to set up Wanchope, but the Costa Rican's shot on

Overmars began to make his presence felt with some characteristic mazy runs.

On 33 minutes, Ray Parlour produced a long range shot which ran just wide. A minute later, Jacob Laursen hauled down a surging Overmars, Stephen Hughes sending



Bergkamp holds off Derby's Lee Carsley.

He crossed for Bergkamp, who could only find the side-netting.

Arsenal continued to apply pressure in the dying minutes, but it seemed as though

Kanu proved sufficient to take Arsenal into the semi-finals as they maintain their quest to defend both trophies.

COVENTRY V CHARLTON

Coventry City won a vital relegation battle at Highfield Road on Saturday, coming from behind to secure a 2-1 victory over Charlton Athletic despite playing with ten men for 34 minutes.

The home side saw Australian international striker John Aloisi sent off for lashing out at Charlton defender Danny Mills when he held the ball as Coventry tried to take a throw-in.

Coventry started well and were soon into their stride, looking full of confidence after their first-ever win at Villa Park seven days earlier.

Gary McAllister was influential in the centre of the park while the pace of Darren Huckerby and the skill of Noel Whelan posed continual problems for Alan Curbishley's side.

Huckerby squandered Coventry's best chance of the opening period when he beat the offside trap to race onto Paul Telfer's chip. However, he elected to shoot when he had time to bring the ball under control, and his volley flew over the bar.

Aloisi, two-goal hero against Villa, then slid in at the near post to divert a Huckerby centre just wide and Simon Royce turned a looping David Burrows header over the bar.

Charlton struggled to make any impact as an attacking force, relying mainly on long-range efforts which failed to trouble Coventry goalkeeper Magnus Hedman.

A precise Gary McAllister pass released Stephen Froggatt in the Charlton penalty area and only a last-ditch tackle from Mills blocked his shot.

Charlton almost snatched the lead against the run of play in the 39th minute. Neil Redfearn put Martin Pringle clear, but a fine save from Hedman kept the scoreline blank.

Charlton showed more enterprise after the interval, dominating the opening 15 minutes of the second half.



From hero to villain, Aussie John Aloisi.

Their reward duly arrived when John Robinson gave them a 56th minute lead.

Hedman did well to block initial efforts from Pringle and Andy Hunt, but Robinson scrambled the ball over the line from close range.

Just sixty seconds later Coventry suffered a major setback with the dismissal of Aloisi. Gordon Strachan's side are resilient however, and dug deep to regain the initiative.

Ten minutes after the sending off, the Charlton defence was breached for the first time in 427 minutes. Huckerby played the ball in to the inspirational Whelan on the edge of the area and his low first time shot curled past Royce into the corner of the net.

With five minutes remaining, Highfield Road erupted when Trondt Soltvedt picked up the ball on the edge of the area and fired in a powerful shot which deflected past Royce.

Coventry manager Strachan will be delighted with the performance of his side, particularly the way they responded to a potentially disastrous situation.

Experienced relegation battlers, the Sky Blues must now have an excellent chance of retaining their premiership status for another season.

SOUTH'TON V WEST HAM

Southampton claimed three vital points in their battle against relegation on Saturday, defeating West Ham 1-0 at The Dell.

The London side wasted numerous chances however, and manager Harry Redknapp will be disappointed not to have travelled home with a point at least.

The Hammers could have been two goals ahead in the first six minutes, but on each occasion, midfielder Matthew Le Tissier appeared in defence to prevent a goal. Firstly, he blocked Frank Lampard's goal-bound shot on the edge of the six-yard box and then cleared off the line from Marc-Vivien Foe.

Moroccan international Hassan Kachloul made the vital breakthrough after ten minutes, firing in a 20-yard left foot shot that deflected off Rio Ferdinand and past Shaka Hislop.

West Ham continued to spurn opportunities, Marc Keller shooting wide from six yards when it seemed easier to score and Southampton defender Claus Lundekvam almost slicing the ball into his own net after good work from Steve Lomas.

Just before the break a mistake on the halfway line by Southampton full-back Patrick Colleter left three West Ham players free against one defender, but a poor centre from Trevor Sinclair allowed Southampton to escape again.

Injury to Norwegian Egil Ostenstad meant that Southampton fielded Welshman Mark Hughes. The veteran striker twice found himself denied by superb saves from Hislop.

As Le Tissier faded in the second half, Southampton came under increasing pressure, but still the visitors could not find the equaliser.

They came closest in the 73rd minute when Paul Jones parried a firm low shot from Sinclair and the ball dipped towards an empty net. Scott Hiley appeared however, to clear the ball from under the bar and keep

his side in front.

With three minutes remaining and the Hammers pressure at its fiercest, Di Canio weaved past three tackles only to bring out another spectacular save from Jones with his shot from six yards.



Fat Matt faded, but the Saints kept marching on.

A final opportunity saw Di Canio shooting onto the terraces from 10 yards.

This was Southampton's fifth home win in their last six league matches and keeps them in touch with other sides struggling near the foot of the premiership.

For West Ham though, the dream of a place in European competition receded further as they slid to yet another away defeat.

Compiled and written by

Daryl Katz

UK

League Highlights

WIMBLEDON V LEICESTER

Leicester City finally ended their dismal league run with a 1-0 victory over Wimbledon at Selhurst Park on Saturday.

Steve Guppy's winner sealed a first premiership success for Leicester since Boxing Day and provided three crucial points in a league campaign which has faltered in recent months.

The Dons had experienced a similar sticky patch but four points from two tough away games at Everton and Sheffield Wednesday in the last week suggested that the Crazy Gang were back in business.

Wimbledon's preparation had been hampered by the shock surrounding manager Joe Kinnear's heart attack at Hillsborough. Kinnear is still in a Sheffield hospital, due to be released early next week.

Leicester showed little sympathy, however. After six minutes, Wimbledon goalkeeper Neil Sullivan miscued a tricky back-pass from Chris Perry into the path of Guppy. The wing-back collected the clearance and promptly despatched the ball straight back past the Scottish international to secure the lead.

Goalmouth action was limited in front of the second lowest premiership crowd of the season.

Tony Cottee, one strike away from 200 league goals, had a glimpse of a chance but was denied by Sullivan.

Ian Marshall found Cottee in space on the edge of the

penalty box but a poor first touch took him back into a crowded area and Sullivan dived low to his right to turn the resulting shot round the post. At the other end, a dominant aerial display by Gerry Tagart kept the Dons at bay.

The best chances for the home side came when a Michael Hughes free-kick whistled over Kasey Keller's cross-bar, and when Marcus Gayle headed wide in first-half stoppage time.

French goalkeeper Pegguy Arphexad replaced a struggling Kasey Keller, and the ball was in the back of the Leicester net ten minutes later. Referee Rob Harris had spotted an infringement however, as Jason Euell scrambled the ball over the line.

The Dons looked dangerous but the visitors almost doubled their lead in the 64th minute when Steve Walsh thumped a header against the crossbar after Matt Elliott flicked on a Muzzy Izzet corner.

Chris Perry denied Cottee his milestone again with a terrific block as the veteran goal poacher looked destined to score from 12 yards.

John Hartson returned to action for the first time since a four-match ban, but could not turn things round as the Dons slumped to only their second home league defeat of the season.

WYCOMBE WAND V COLCHESTER

Wycombe's search for Division Two survival took another major knock thanks to a dramatic late late penalty equaliser from Colchester's leading goalscorer David Gregory. The game ended 2-2.

Wycombe had looked to be about to earn their valuable win to help guide them towards safety thanks to excellent second-half goals from 19-year-old Andrew Baird and vastly experienced striker Keith Scott.

After intense early pressure The U's finally took a deserved lead on 18 minutes thanks to former Tottenham striker Jason Dozzell.

Manager Mick Wadsworth's recent signing Warren Aspinall had delivered the fifth Colchester corner into the heart of the Wycombe area where Frenchman Stephane Pounewatchy headed on to allow Jason Dozzell, despite home 'keeper Martin Taylor's attempt to clear, to thump home his third of the season.

Encouraged by Colchester's strange lack of attitude during the early period of the second half Wycombe continued to force the pace with the equaliser finally arriving on 57 minutes thanks to Andrew Baird.

Home midfielder David Carroll created such problems for the home defence that Baird was allowed to beat 'keeper Carl Emberson's dive with a rasping 12-yard drive.

And it took two old pros to work Wycombe's second, Carroll again taking advantage of hesitancy in the Colchester defence to find Scott with his 25-yard free-kick and he comprehensively beat Carl Emberson.

Wycombe seemed to be cruising to their win only for Colchester's David Gregory to be gifted a late penalty that he struck past Taylor with relish.

It's never over till the Fat Lady sings!

SWINDON TOWN V BOLTON

Mark Walters, remember him? He is now at Swindon and, after issuing an ultimatum to manager Jimmy Quinn, returned triumphantly to the side.

The former England and Liverpool winger scored the pick of six goals in an encounter made all the more exciting by a string of defensive errors.

And Walters, who told Quinn to play him or sell him, showed why he is still a firm favourite at the County Ground.

The 34-year-old fired home a wonderful free-kick midway through the second half which gave Swindon a 3-1 lead and which would surely have proved the winning goal but for brave Bolton's battling spirit.

Just three days after Swindon threw away their lead at home to Tranmere, when they suffered a 3-2 defeat, Quinn's men had to settle for a share of the points as Bolton fought their way to an unlikely draw.

A blunder by Bolton goal-keeper Jussi Jaaskelainen handed Bobby Howe the opening goal, his weak header bobbling into the net after 17 minutes.

Chris Hay doubled Swindon's lead three minutes after the break, running from the halfway line to collect a pass from Scott Leitch before sliding his shot past the Bolton keeper.

South Africa international Mark Fish gave the visitors hope when a poor clearance from substitute Gareth Hall allowed the Bolton centre-half to volley home with a spectacular overhead kick.

But Walters' screamer from a 25-yard free kick appeared to have won it - until Swindon's shocking defending let them down once again.

Danish midfielder Claus Jensen found his way through three defenders before smashing the ball home with Town keeper Frank Talia rooted to his line, just two minutes later.

Bolton's Icelandic substitute Eidur Gudjohnson levelled the scores following a great run and cross from yet another Scandinavian, Dane Michael Johansen, with 13 minutes left.

Bolton were twice fortunate to escape when Walters hit the post with a curling free-kick and when Finnish keeper Jaaskelainen made a fine save at the feet of Hay in the second half.

Referee Barry Knight flourished seven yellow cards in a fiercely contested game.

Kevin Phillips kept Sunderland rolling on towards the Premiership with a goal that sealed a 1-0 win and badly dented Norwich City's play-off prospects. Phillips pounced after seven minutes for his 11th goal in only 16 matches, clinching Sunderland's ninth league win in a row at home.

Norwich, the first visitors to win at the Stadium of Light, rarely threatened to repeat that success and could have been beaten more decisively. Phillips missed two second-half chances, winger Nicky Summerbee twice hit a post and City were lucky not to concede a penalty when Gavin McCann was fouled.

FULHAM V LINCOLN CITY

Geoff Horsfield scored his fourth goal on the spin and in the process notched up Fulham's 11th straight home win. The Cottagers' man of the moment rose to connect from a cross from Kit Symons in first-half stoppage time from eight yards out. It proved to be one of the few memorable moments in an otherwise scrappy match.

Kevin Keegan agreed after the game that in their last six home matches, only Reading had come with any further ambition than to frustrate the home team. Yet the job-share manager reckoned that home fans would have little to complain about provided they kept winning.

On the other hand Lincoln assistant-manager Phil Stant admitted they nearly achieved what they had set out to do, as he said: "The team worked their socks off and we're very disappointed not to have got anything."

"You're dreaming if you think you're going to play Fulham in your own half but we silenced their crowd and slowed things down." Despite Stant's claim for his own team it was the league leaders who ran the show.

On eight minutes Steve Finnan supplied Barry Hayles whose shot from 12 yards out just skimmed the right-hand post.

Two minutes later Hayles fired over from 12 yards out when hitting the target seemed easier.

Former Fulham 'keeper John Vaughan was again called into action when Horsfield's shot required the Lincoln 'keeper to block with his legs from 12 yards out. Just when it appeared the teams would go into the break on level terms, Symons' cross found Horsfield who put the home side ahead with only ten seconds remaining on the referee's watch.

On 54 minutes The Imps' Paul Miller was left cursing his luck when he had a free header from Stuart Bimson's corner, which flew over the Fulham crossbar for the last effort Lincoln made on the home goal.

But a Steve Hayward free-kick found Symons heading just over as Keegan's men became increasingly frustrated in their attempts to extend their lead.

11,000 fans saw this game.

CARLISLE UTD V SHREWSBURY TOWN

In Division Three, Mark Kearney, Shrewsbury's assistant Manager summed up the feeling in the visitors' camp: "I am disappointed in the result and the performance, we lost and played poorly - it's a double blow. In the last seven games our defence has been strong, but today it was shaky."

"Berkley's goal was super, he finished superbly. Their winner looked offside, but these things happen".

It took a delightful Scott Dobie double to sink Shrewsbury and give Carlisle their first win in seven games. United had to come from behind to record their first Brunton Park win since Nigel Pearson took over back in December.

United started brightly with nine goal top-scorer Ian Stevens breaking clear of the visiting defence in the first minute, but the former Shrewsbury man screwed his shot across the face of the goal.

Having absorbed the early United pressure, Shrewsbury started to carve out chances of their own, but failed to make the most of some erratic goalkeeping

by Tony Caig. The Carlisle 'keeper had to call on Stuart Whitehead to make a crucial goal-line block in the 16th minute and then the joint efforts of Billy Barr and Damon Searle denied Steve Kerrigan in the 20th minute.

The 'keeper redeemed himself with a brilliant save in the 25th minute to keep out a Roger Preece 12-yard half-volley. United's defence was eventually breached in the 31st minute, when Caig completely missed a Gareth Hanmer corner and the ball flew across goal for Austin Berkley to fire in between a defender and the post from the edge of the six-yard box. The Shrewsbury lead had lasted only four minutes when Scott Dobie bagged the first of his brace, reaching a deep cross from Damon Searle to steer a 12-yard header beyond the dive of Paul Edwards.

The home-grown striker, who spent two days training with Derby County in midweek, secured the victory in the 86th minute when he stole unmarked into the six-yard box to nod Anthony's pinpoint cross past Edwards.

HAYES V RUSHDEN & DIAMONDS

Big-spending Rushden & Diamonds looked to have virtually blown their title chances after a 2-1 defeat to an in-form Hayes side in the Conference.

The heavily sanded Church Road pitch, and a home team looking for revenge after a 5-0 defeat earlier in the season, were always going to make life difficult for the visitors.

The commitment on both sides was evident as early as the fifth minute when Chris Sparks and Carl Heggs were both booked after a fierce clash.

The Diamonds went ahead with a scrambled goal on 12 minutes from their only corner of the game. Russell Meara twice juggled the ball under pressure, before it was forced in via home defender Goodliffe.

The home side created several good openings with Asselman, Randall and Wilkinson all going close.

The half came to a close with three more cautions and injury victim Nicholas Roddis being replaced by

Barry Moore.

Hayes came out fired-up after the break and levelled matters on 47 minutes. Flynn's corner was headed down for Sparks to fire left-footed past Smith into the roof of the net from ten yards. Within six minutes Hayes had taken the lead. Goodliffe lofted a long free-kick into the Rushden box, defender Nathan Bunce finding space to fire home on the turn from 12 yards.

The home side was put under constant pressure as the game wore on, often having to rely on a blanket defence to survive.

Hayes, for their part, kept on pushing forward for a first goal and both Charles and Randall came close to finishing the visitors off.

Hayes finished the stronger and thoroughly deserved the points before the season's highest crowd of 1,302.

This win moves Hayes into fourth place and all but ends Rushden's promotion chances.



**New Matilda
17 year old
Peita-Claire
Hepperlin**

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